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ABSTRACT

Immigration and acculturation of Cape Verdeans in the United States from the mid-19th century to the present are discussed. Emphasis is on the period prior to 1922, at which time the United States Congress enacted new laws restricting the immigration of people of color. The Cape Verde islands are located in the Atlantic off the coast of West Africa. Because of their location, they served as a safe harbor to generations of slavers, pirates, smugglers, and sailors. The document is presented in four chapters. Chapter I discusses the historic link between the Cape Verde islands and New England. Chapter II examines the practice of hiring Cape Verdeans as crew members for New England's whaling ships from the period before the American Revolution to the latter half of the 19th century. Chapter III discusses the Cape Verdean-American packet trade during the 1800s and the settlement of Cape Verdean seamen in New England towns. Chapter IV characterizes experiences of Cape Verdeans in America during the period 1900-24. Topics discussed include processes of immigration to the United States, employment, income, and living conditions. Numerous photographs are incorporated into the text. (DB)

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# CAPE VERDEANS IN AMERICA

## *OUR STORY*

***PA NHA FIDJO—PA'EL PODÊ CONCHÊ ÊS CAMIN LONGE E DIFÍCIL QU' NÓS GENTE TIVE QU' PASSÁ.***

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*Cover:* Joaquim Almeida of São Nicolau and New Bedford, Mass. *(Photo by Ron Barboza)* and the whaler *Charles W. Morgan* photographed for the filming of the 1922 movie *Down to the Sea in Ships (Photo by Elmer Clifton Productions.)*

**TCHUBA** means rain in Crioulo, the language of the Cape Verdean people. Throughout five centuries of Portuguese colonial rule in our drought ridden West African islands, our poets and song writers have used the word as a metaphor or symbol for "hope".

**TCHUBA**, the American Committee for Cape Verde, is an independent, non-profit, tax exempt organization. **TCHUBA** is engaged in the production of educational materials and programs for use in America as well as self-help development programs in the Republic of Cape Verde.

The leadership of **TCHUBA** is composed of Cape Verdeans, Cape Verdean-Americans, and other individuals who share our dedication to "life for Cape Verde" and to cultural pluralism in American life.

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## Prefácio

O período que decorreu entre os meados do Século XIX e a Segunda Guerra Mundial é aquele de que a maioria dos Caboverdiano-Americanos conserva memórias de uma estreita relação familiar. Esta foi, de facto, a era da maior migração de Caboverdianos para os Estados Unidos. Em 1922, contudo, o Congresso dos Estados Unidos decretou novas leis que restringiram a imigração de pessoas de côr. A corrente regular de novas chegadas de pessoas de Cabo Verde diminuiu dramaticamente, passando a um número realmente insignificante. Por outro lado, o número de Caboverdianos que às Ilhas regressavam para visitas periódicas decresceu pelo medo de que poderiam ter dificuldades em voltar aos Estados Unidos. Os anos de guerra acabaram virtualmente com o ritmo já irregular do tráfico marítimo entre Cabo Verde e o Sudeste da Nova Inglaterra. A comunidade Caboverdiana radicada nos Estados Unidos encontrava-se efectivamente separada dos Caboverdianos nas Ilhas e assim se conservariam pelos próximos trinta anos, desenvolvendo-se separadamente, sem aquela regular e benéfica interacção que sempre tem sido característica da experiência Caboverdiana.

Os Caboverdianos, da mesma forma que todos os outros grupos *culturais* que entraram para a sociedade Americana, aceitaram no seu seio características, crenças, atitudes, comportamentos, formas artísticas, etc., de vários outros grupos. Na medida em que este processo de comparticipação, empréstimo, justificação, rejeição e modificação continuou, os Caboverdianos tornaram-se no grupo *étnico* Caboverdiano-Americano que hoje conhecemos. Um grupo cultural só se torna num grupo *étnico-cultural* quando aquele começa a comparticipar activamente com outros grupos culturais e é modificado por esta contínua interacção.

As décadas de 1922/1965 traduziram-se em anos de separação para a família Caboverdiana. Nas Ilhas, o povo lutava contra contínuos ciclos de seca, fome e doença. Durante as quatro décadas que se seguiram a 1ª Guerra Mundial a negligência colonial de Portugal aumentou de intensidade, reflectindo-se, principalmente, nos campos económico e de necessidades humanas nas Ilhas de Cabo Verde. Com as portas do E. U. A. efectivamente fechadas, os Caboverdianos começaram a emigrar em grandes números para a Europa, América do Sul e Africa Ocidental. Outros, face à perspectiva de anos de desemprêgo, assinaram contratos de trabalho e partiram para o calor Equatorial para trabalhar nas plantações (roças) de São Tomé. Durante este período, muitos Caboverdianos nas Ilhas receberam cartas, com regularidade, e uma rara e bastante irregular visita dos "Mercanos", os seus parentes Americanos. Invariàvelmente, as cartas incluiam fotografia de um primo bem nutrido e bem vestido que tinha sido bem sucedido no Novo Mundo. Só raras vezes um visitante Caboverdiano-Americano dizia das penosas e longas horas de trabalho nas fábricas de têxteis ou do pesadíssimo labor da apanha da airela vermelha (cranberry). Ninguém mencionou a pobreza e o racismo a que todas as pessoas de côr eram sujeitas nos Estados Unidos.

Com o tempo, o Sonho Americano conquistou muita gente em CaboVerde. Os Ilhéus agarraram-se rápidamente à velha mitologia de que a honestidade e um trabalhar diligente levariam necessàriamente a um bom sucesso financeiro na América. Os Ilhéus estavam convencidos de que lhes bastava conseguir entrar na América, trabalhar rijamente, educar os filhos e obedecer as leis. Pensavam eles que esta protege-los-iam e bem assim as suas propriedades contra todas as formas de exploração.

Com a passagem das leis de liberalização da imigração, em 1965, acelerou-se o processo de reunificação das famílias Caboverdianas. Na medida em que estes recém-chegados começaram a estabelecer-se em Boston, Brockton,Scituate e New Bedford, Massachusetts; Pawtucket, R.I.; Waterbury, Connecticut; Brooklyn, New York, e noutras comunidades ao longo da costa Leste, eles tiveram que enfrentar uma realidade Americana para a qual não se encontravam preparados. Para além de um grande número de problemas de sobrevivência relacionados com emprêgo, habitação, discriminação racial e impotência política das suas comunidades, estes novos imigrantes tiveram ainda que enfrentar um outro fenómeno: o grupo étnico Caboverdiano-Americano. Estes descendentes daqueles que tinham chegado sessenta ou cem anos atrás pareciam-se físicamente com os novos imigrantes, mas em quase todos os outros aspectos constituiam um povo bastante diferente. Um e outro conhecía muito pouco da história recente e da forma de sentir e de proceder do outro grupo.

*Cape Verdeans in America* pretende fornecer uma estrutura que sirva de base de meditação sobre a experiência daqueles Ilhéus que se estabeleceram nos Estados Unidos antes de 1922. A nossa história não inclui reis, generais famosos e magnates do comércio ou da indústria. O herói na nossa históia é o povo Caboverdiano. A verdadeira medida do seu génio criador é a sua teimosa persistência como povo, apesar de cinco Séculos de negligência colonial, racismo e exploração económica. Esperamos que este opúsculo sirva para melhorar o entendimento e a compreensão entre os membros da família Caboverdiano-Americana.

R.A.A.

## Preface

The period of time between the mid-19th century and World War II is the context for the family memories of most Cape Verdean-Americans. This was the era of the largest migration of Cape Verdeans to the United States. In 1922, the United States Congress enacted new laws restricting the immigration of peoples of color. The steady stream of new arrivals from Cape Verde receded to a mere trickle and fewer Cape Verdeans travelled back to the islands for periodic visits for fear that they would have difficulty returning to the States. The war years virtually ended the casual pattern of ocean traffic between Cape Verde and southeastern New England. The immigrant community in America was effectively separated from Cape Verdeans in the islands. For approximately the next thirty years the two communities were left to develop without the regular cross fertilization that had always been characteristic of the Cape Verdean experience.

Cape Verdeans like all *cultural* groups that had entered American society borrowed characteristics, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, art forms, etc. from many other groups. As this process of sharing, borrowing, justifying, rejecting, and modifying continued, Cape Verdeans became the Cape Verdean-American *ethnic* group we know today. A cultural group becomes an *ethnic cultural* group only when it begins to actively interact with other cultural groups and is changed by that continuing interaction.

These decades (1922-1965) were years of separation within the Cape Verdean family. In the islands the people were wrestling with continuing cycles of drought, famine, and disease. Throughout the four decades following World War I Portugal increased its colonial neglect for the economic and human needs of the Cape Verde Islands. With the doors to America effectively closed, Cape Verdeans began to emigrate in larger numbers to Europe, South America, and West Africa. Others, faced with the prospect of years of unemployment, signed contract labor agreements and went off to work in the equatorial heat of the São Tomé plantations. Throughout this period, many Cape Verde Islanders regularly received letters and irregularly — rarely — a visit from the *'mercanos'*, their American relatives. Invariably the letter would include a photograph of the well fed, well dressed cousin who had achieved success in the New World. Seldom would a visiting Cape Verdean-American recount the drudgery of long hours in the textile factories or the back-breaking labor of the cranberry harvest. No one told of the poverty and racism which was common fare for all peoples of color in the United States.

In time, the *American Dream* took hold of many people in Cape Verde. Islanders held fast to the ancient mythology that honesty and hard work would necessarily lead to financial success in America. Islanders were convinced that all they would have to do was get to America, work hard, educate their children and obey the laws. Then, they thought the law would protect them and their property from all manner of exploitation.

With the enactment of the liberalized immigration laws of 1965, the process of reuniting Cape Verdean families accelerated. As these newcomers began to arrive in Boston, Brockton, Scituate, and New Bedford, Massachusetts; Pawtucket, Rhode Island; Waterbury, Connecticut; Brooklyn, New York; and other communities along the east coast, they came face to face with an American reality they were not prepared for. In addition to a host of survival issues related to employment, housing, racial discrimination, and the political impotence of their communities, the new immigrants were confronted with the phenomena of the Cape Verdean-American ethnic group. These descendents of those who had made their way to America sixty or one hundred years ago looked like the new immigrants but in almost every other way they were a vastly different people. Each group knew little of the other's recent history and treasured memories.

*Cape Verdeans in America* attempts to provide a framework for thinking about the experience of those Islanders who settled in the United States before 1922. Our story is not one of kings, famous generals and business tycoons. The hero in our story *is* the Cape Verdean people. The true measure of their creative genius is their stubborn persistence as a people in the face of five centuries of colonial neglect, racism and economic exploitation. We hope it helps to close the information gap within the Cape Verdean-American family.

R.A.A.

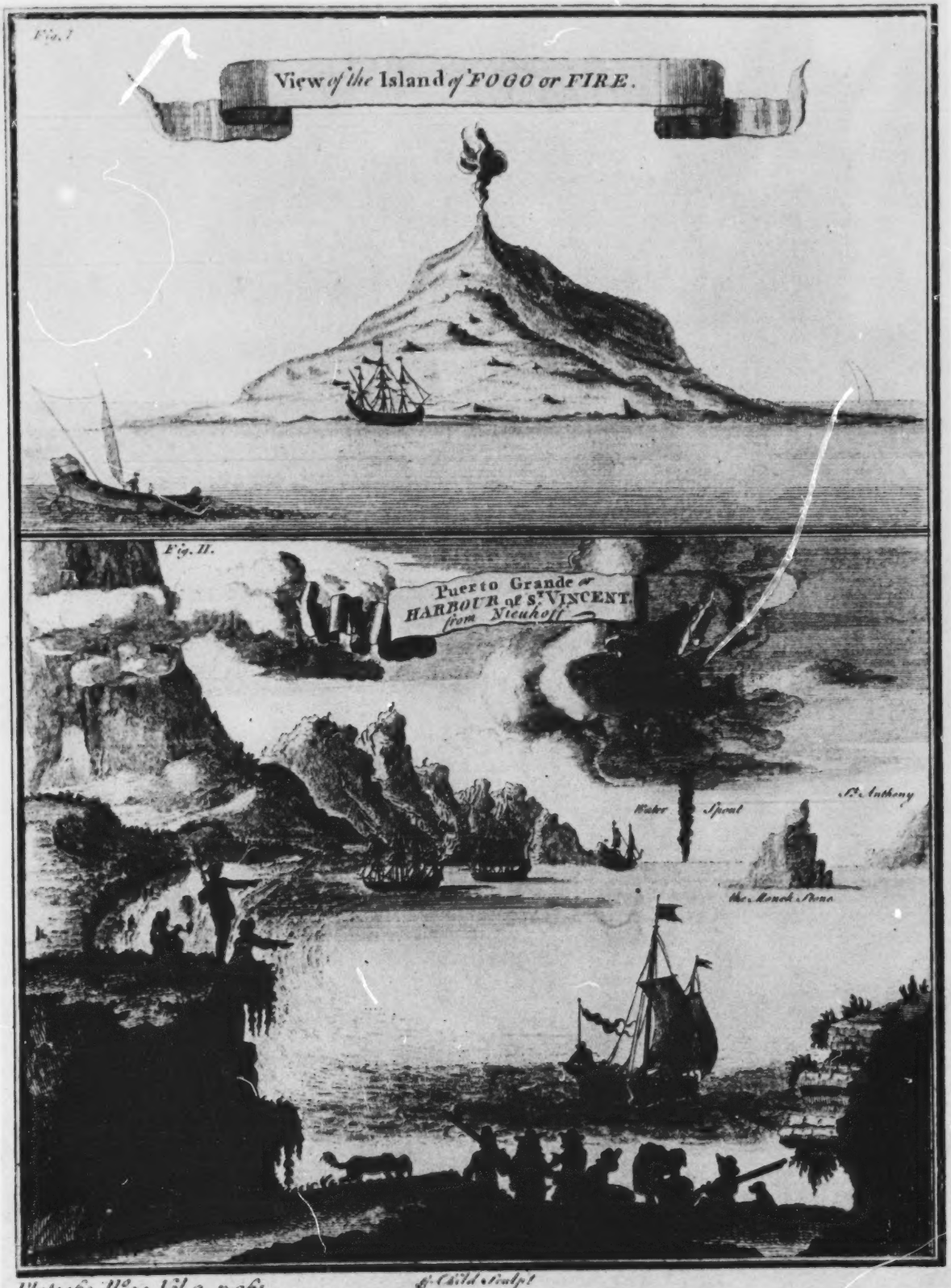


Plate 163. N°. 94. Vol. 2. p. 361. G. Child Sculpt

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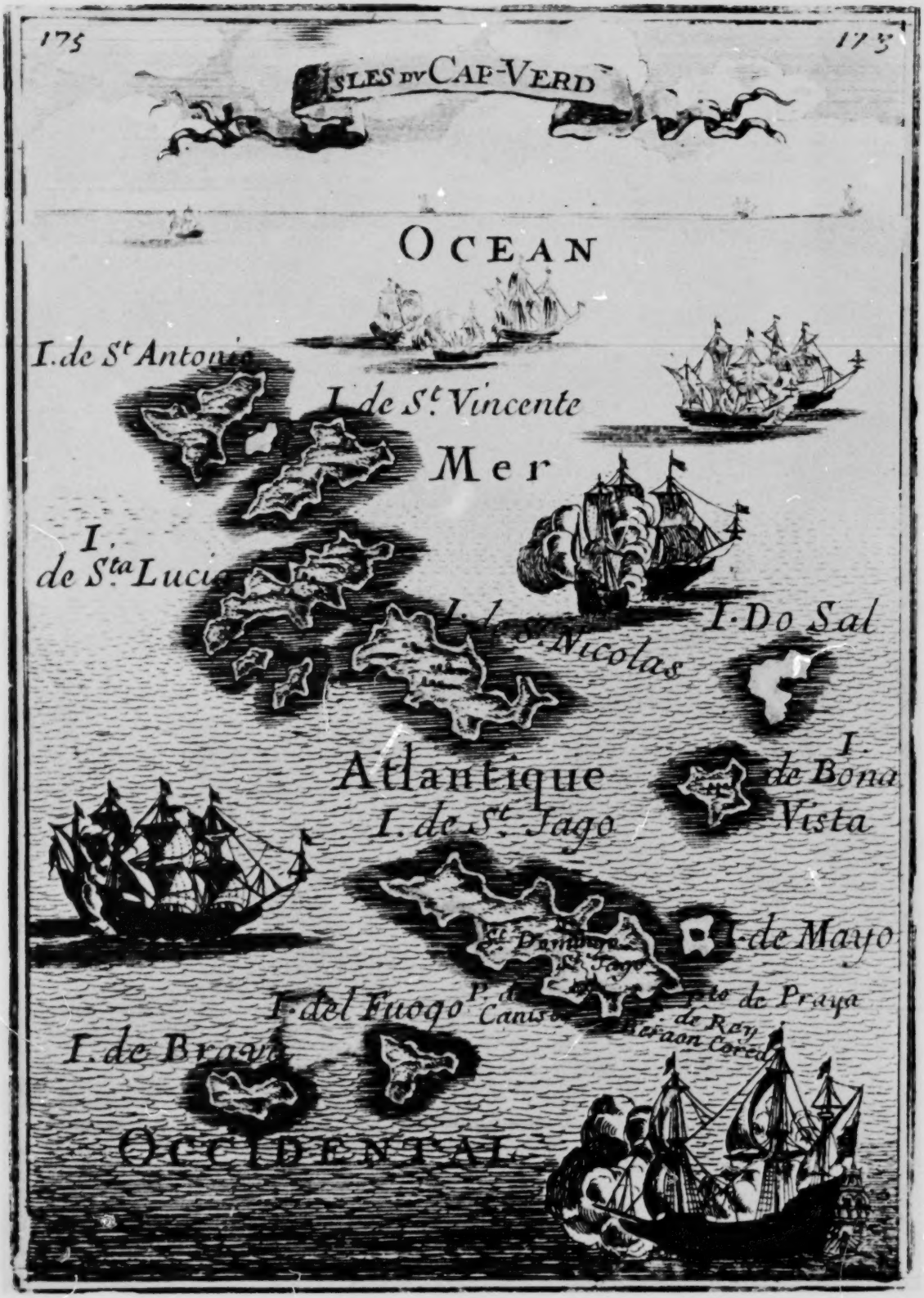
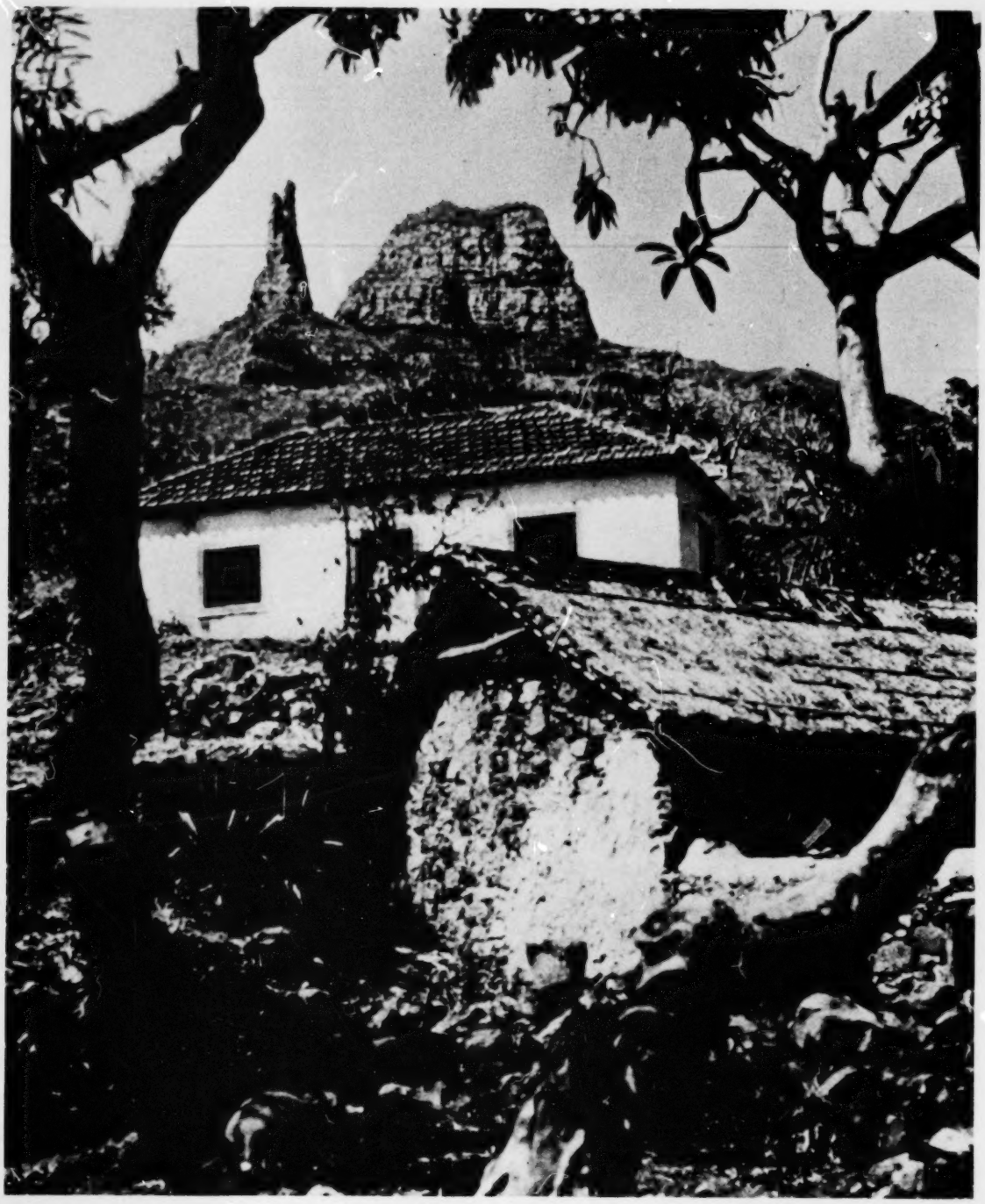
## CHAPTER I
## EARLY CONTACTS



There are presently about 275,000 Cape Verdeans and their descendants in the United States. These Cape Verdean-Americans are the products of the only "voluntary" African emigration to the United States. Most Cape Verdeans can trace their origins back to a particular village or valley on one of the ten small islands of the archipelago. This chapter will discuss the historic link between the Cape Verde Islands and New England. Indeed, the United States has had an importance in the socio-economic history of the Cape Verde Islands that is surpassed only by that of Portugal.[1] The Islands were a part of the Portuguese colonial empire until 1975.



An interior village on the island of Sãotiago.

The village of Nossa Senhora do Monte, Brava, c. 1910.

According to historian Samuel Elliot Morison, Columbus stopped in the Cape Verde Islands in 1498 to take on provisions for his third voyage to America.[2] For centuries, many other mariners would do likewise. The Islands' location in the Atlantic—370 miles west of Senegal; 1200 miles from Brazil—made them a desirable haven for slavers, pirates, smugglers, and sailors of all kinds. By one estimate the Cape Verde Islands were the embarkation point for some 28,000 slaves captured in Africa for shipment to the New World, between 1601-1700 alone.[3] Although the importation of slaves to the Cape Verde Islands was decreasing as the seventeenth century wore on,[4] the Islands continued to offer safe harbor for slavers, and many Cape Verdeans were active in the slave trade themselves. For example, Captain Quirino Pinheiro, a Brava sea captain of the nineteenth century, is said to have

Street in Nova Sintra, Brava, c. 1910.

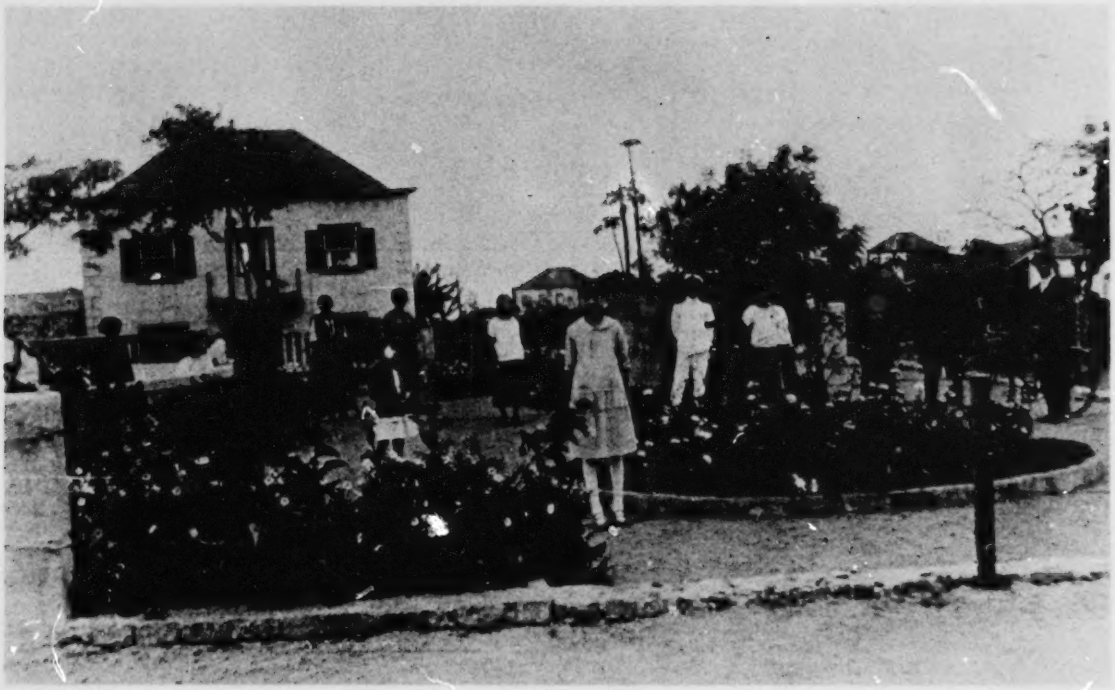
brought hundreds of slaves to America. The naturalist Charles Darwin, who stopped in the Cape Verde Islands during his outward bound voyage on the *Beagle*, mentions that "a very pretty schooner came in this morning; it is strongly suspected that she is a slaver in disguise." When the *Beagle* put in at the Cape Verde Islands on her return voyage four years later, Darwin relates that, "After a most excellent passage we came to an anchor early in the morning at Porto Praya. We found lying there, as commonly is the case, some slaving vessels."[5]

Many of the slavers flew the American flag, for the United States allowed her ships to engage in the trade until 1808 and even thereafter would not allow the British navy to inspect her ships in England's efforts to abolish slaving. (In fact, the War of 1812 was fought over this very issue.) Later many American slave ships flew the Portuguese flag, often by having the necessary papers arranged in the Cape Verde Islands, because Portugal did not outlaw the trade until 1830.[6]

The merchants of Rhode Island and Massachusetts were quite active in the slave commerce. In 1708, Governor Cranston of Rhode Island reported that one hundred and three vessels had been built in that tiny colony between 1698 and 1708 and "in most cases made a slave voyage."[7] In the mid-nineteenth century a North Carolina congressman reminded the United States Congress "Massachusetts is the state more responsible under heaven than any other community in this land for the introduction of slavery into the continent, with all the curses that have followed it."[8] Ships of Boston were still being seized in the 1860's by the United States Africa Squadron, based in the Cape Verde Islands, where slavers were taking refuge.[9]

Americans smuggling other wares had used the Islands as a convenient pickup and dropoff point since the early 1800's. After the War of 1812, Britain forbade American ships to put in at the English colonies of Sierra Leone and Gambia; therefore, hides and other goods were clandestinely shipped to the Cape Verde Islands where they were sold for a better price to American ships.[10] In 1818, an American trader, Samuel Hodges, established a partnership with a Cape Verdean, Manuel Antonio Martins, whereby American merchandise was smuggled in African small craft to every part of the Atlantic coast of Africa.[11] From 1818 to 1827 Hodges served as the first U.S. Consul to Cape Verde, where he became a leading commercial figure. Merchants in Goree, Gambia, and Sierra Leone also sent their own vessels to the Cape Verde Islands to trade with the Americans.[13]

Watercolor of the Mansion of Samuel Hodges in Praia (1832), first U. S. Consul in Cape Verde.
*Photo Peabody Museum Collection*



The *praça* at Nova Sintra, Brava c. 1910. Each Cape Verdean village and town has a praça, the principal square which serves as the center of community life. *Photo-M. S. C.*

Capt. Salisbury Blackmer and his son William Blackmer of New Bedford, who were involved in the Cape Verde trade for decades, understood the Cape Verdean Crioulo language and were believed to be better acquainted with the islands than any other American merchants.[14] Merchants in Salem, Massachusetts were also very much involved in the Cape Verde slave trade and left behind interesting descriptions of the island of Maio, the principal port of U.S. commerce.

> The Governor, the Commander of the Troops and the Judges are all Negroes, the only white man that I saw on the island was the Collector. When I was first introduced to the Governor I found a bare-legged sentry marching backward and forward in front of his den with a rusty old gun with no lock to it. Afterwards, I saw 12 men exercising and I counted five out of the twelve that had no locks to their guns ... in fact any person that ever saw European troops must look upon troops as these with utmost contempt.[15]

American sea captains often showed complete disregard for the Portuguese authorities. They frequently left without paying the required port taxes even for the salt they had loaded. The Captain of the *Augusta* had no fear of the Governor of Maio. "As to his sending of soldiers he might do that if he chose for I had harpoons enough to arm all my people and that I would bid defiance to all the troops he could muster on the Isle of Mayo."[16]

On one occasion the British took control of what they believed to be a pirate ship in the harbor of Mindêlo. Hodges complained to Secretary of State Henry Clay, for the ship was originally American, asking

> for the protection of our commerce that a National Vessel occasionally cruise here, and on the coast of Africa, to protect the Commerce of the United States against pirates and certain British cruisers, whose Commanders respect no flag.[17]

However, in general, the American sphere of influence in Cape Verde was respected, if only because the Islands were not interesting enough to the English and French who had good ports on the West Coast of Africa. The *Augusta*'s captain admitted, "Nothing but the poverty of these Islands prevents them from falling into the hands of the English or French, for I am sure one company of European troops could conquer the island of Santiago."[18]

In 1842, eighty-seven American merchant ships traded in the Islands as opposed to sixty-one Portuguese and thirty-six British ships.[19] It is recorded that 338 American vessels stopped in the islands for salt between 1851-1879.[20] The merchant ships brought tobacco, flour, biscuits, rice, cod, port, ham, buttermilk, lard, soap, candles, cotton, paper, thread, cloth, shoes, rope, nails, tar, wood,

dishes, watches, and other manufactured goods from New England. Wooden shingles from Massachusetts still cover many houses in Cape Verde. The ships came from New York, Boston, Providence, Baltimore, Portland, New London, and New Bedford and were on their way to the West Coast of Africa, Madeira, the Azores, the Canaries, Brazil, or around the world to sell their wares.[21] Sometimes they would not return for a year but usually they made fast voyages between the U.S. and the Cape Verde Islands with only a brief stop on the African West Coast after the British and French relaxed their trade restrictions.

In 1832, the ships began returning with tales of horrible starvation in the Cape Verdes. Capt. Ryder of the *Fredonia* out of Salem reported that men and women had been seen in the streets gnawing at discarded bones. The American Consul calculated that fourteen people were dying of starvation in Praia everyday, and the rest of the population was too weak to bury the dead. The Governor of the Islands sent a plea via Capt. Ryder, "For God's Sake, tell them to send us something."[22]

Messrs. A. and P. Flint and Company of Boston offered to carry free food relief in their ship, the *Charles*. A committee of prominent Bostonians was organized and a Sunday collection made. People in Boston gave $6,800; Portland (Maine) gave $1,200; Newburyport, $585.87; Charlestown, $250; and cotton factory workers in Ipswich contributed $32.20. The ship sailed with 600 barrels of mackerel, potatoes, flour, bread, beef, pork, rice and corn consigned to the U.S. Consul and the Governor.[23] Other cities also took heed of the misery in the Cape Verde Islands. New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore collected $25,000 to send eight thousand barrels of flour and meal.[24]

The ship *Citizen* arrived from the Islands reporting that the magnitude of starvation was not exaggerated.

> In Brava and Fogo the distress was most calamitious; within a few months, two hundred persons had perished there by famine and such was their abject condition that even a worm-eaten biscuit was caught at with avidity, and the blessing of Heaven invoked upon the donor.[25]

Church of the Navigators, Brava

Street in Nova Sintra, Brava. c. 1910.

Despite aid from the United States, 30,000 out of a population of 300,000 died of starvation. St. Antão was the worse affected where 11,000 died out of a population of 26,000.

Passing American ships responding to the Islanders often left part of the ship's supplies behind. The log of the *Citizen* records "Sailing on, in due time we sighted the Cape Verde Islands and came to off St. Anthony. Boats were sent in shore for certain supplies, but found the people in a destitute condition by reason of a severe drought. We obtained little from them and instead, gave them some things from the ships stores. Making but a short stay here, we fell away before the fresh northwest trade winds."[26]

Street in São Felipe, Fogo. c. 1910.

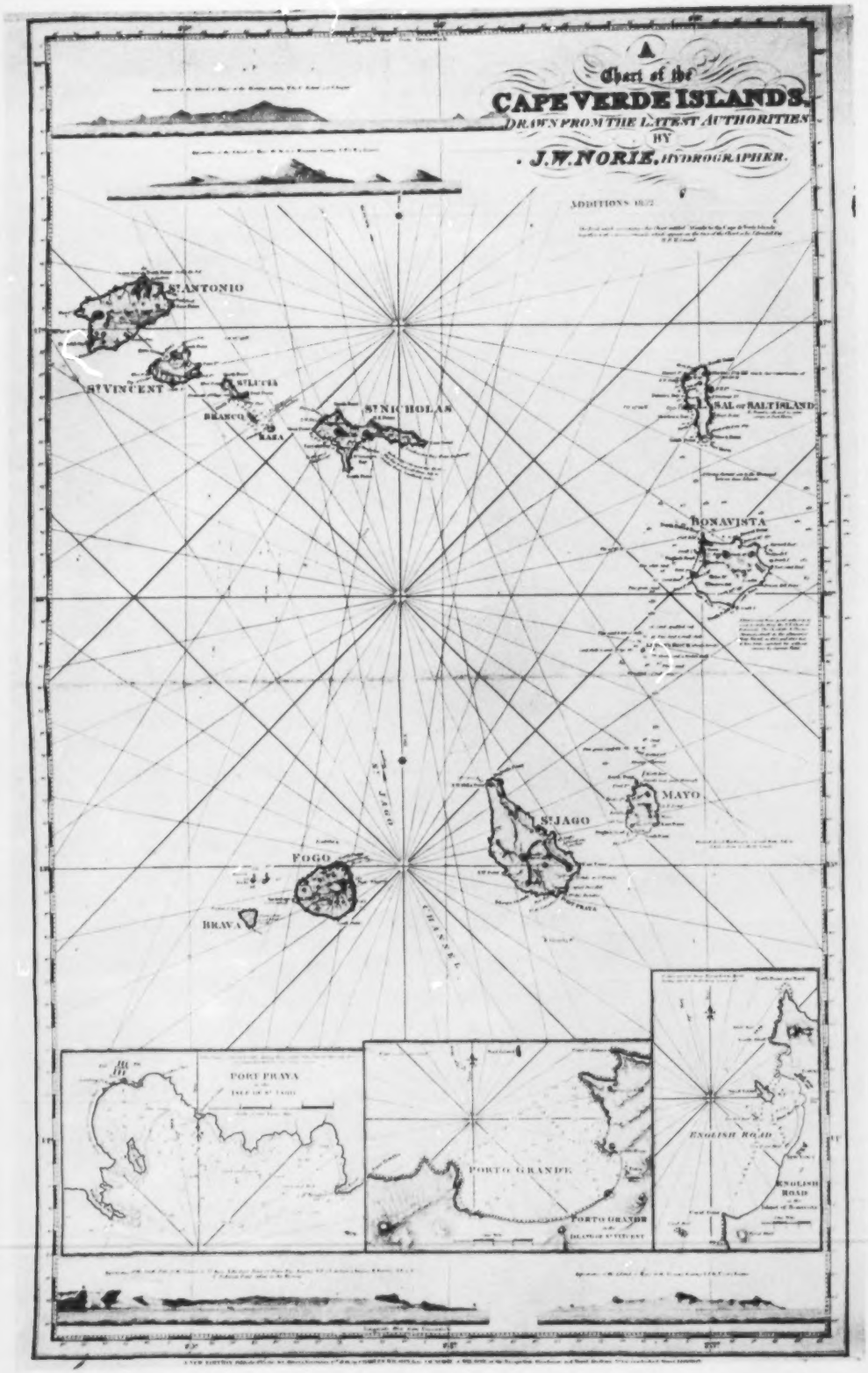
In 1855, Antonio Martins, then U.S. vice-consul in Mindêlo, wrote to Commodore Crabbe of the African Squadron that 30,000 people were living on banana stalks and the carcasses of dead animals and that as a result of the crop failure on S. Nicolau 10,000 would die on that Island.[27] Lt. Washington Bartlett of the sloop *Jamestown* brought back a letter from the Bishop of the Cape Verde Islands to Archbishop John Hughes of New York and informed the American public that death was imminent for many unless help arrived from the United States.[28]

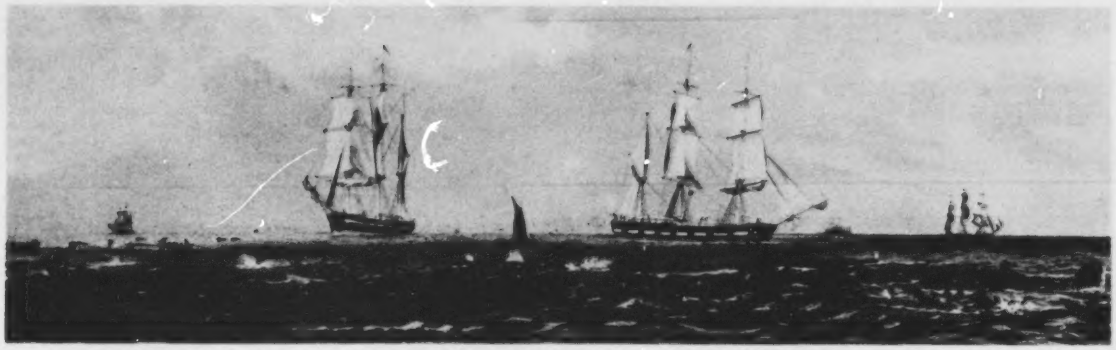
After hearing Bartlett, members of the New York Corn Exchange appointed a committee to collect funds and provisions and arrange for sending the aid; $5,800 was immediately raised in New York.[29] The citizens of Alexandria, Va. sent 500 bushels of wheat and the Corn Exchange of Baltimore sent $1,045 to New York.[30] Still more money was raised through Portuguese-American merchants, the Catholic Church, and the YMCA. On July 24, 1856, the *New Hand* arrived in Cape Verde with 400 barrels of corn and other provisions.

Martins wrote, "I cannot properly express my feelings of gratefulness for the extraordinary efforts made in behalf of this suffering people, or my admiration at such disinterested benevolence. It is impossible to calculate the number of lives that will be saved by this most timely arrival of food."[31] Some food was also received from the Canaries, the African coast, and Brazil.[32] Sufficient rains came during the summer of 1856 to yield some crops but a fourth of the population had perished in two years due to cholera, small-pox, and the famine. The limited money in the Islands had been exhausted in importing food. The Governor had collected all the hard currency in the Islands to send boats to the African coast to buy rice.[33] The U.S. consul remarked that trading in Cape Verde was almost nonexistant, as salt was the only commodity left which the Islands had to export.[34] By the late nineteenth century Cape Verde's principal export to the U.S. was her own young men. Their story is told in the following chapters.

Working the *salinas* or salt works on the island of Sal. c. 1910.

# CHAPTER II
# WHALING



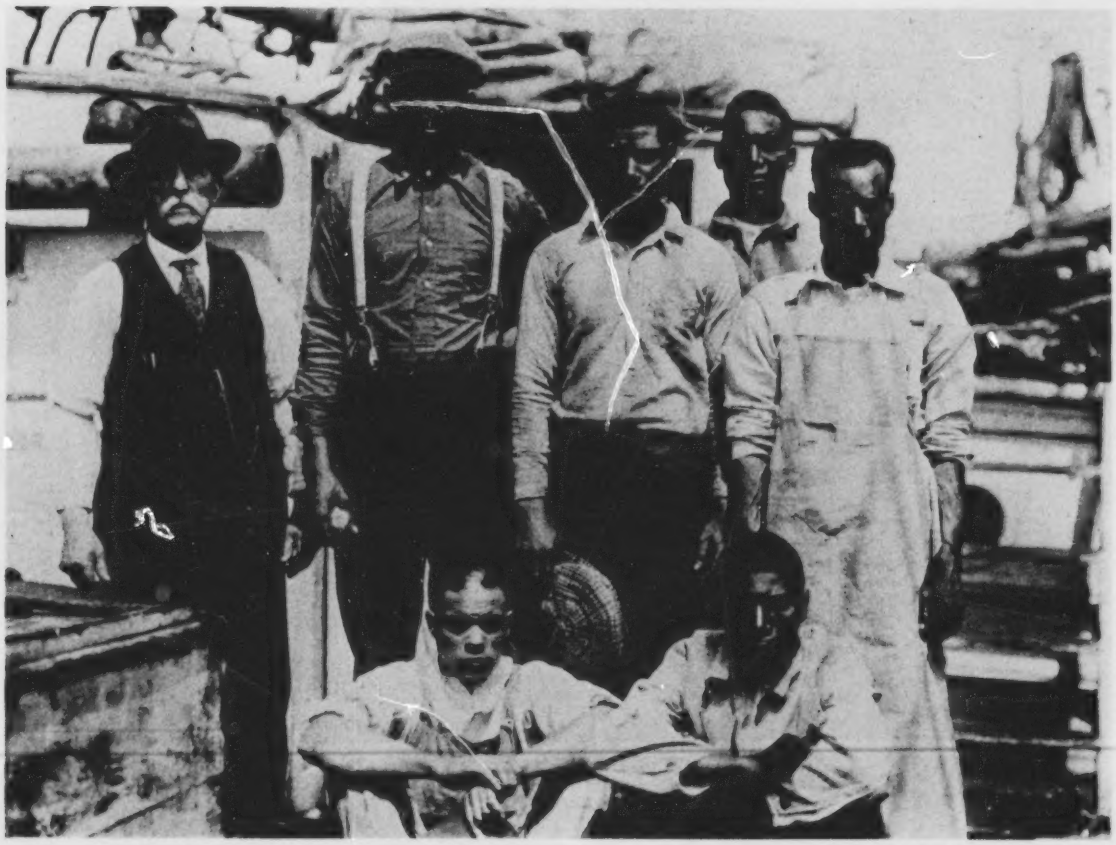


Sperm whaling. From an original drawing by Benjamin Russell. *Photo O. D. H. S.*

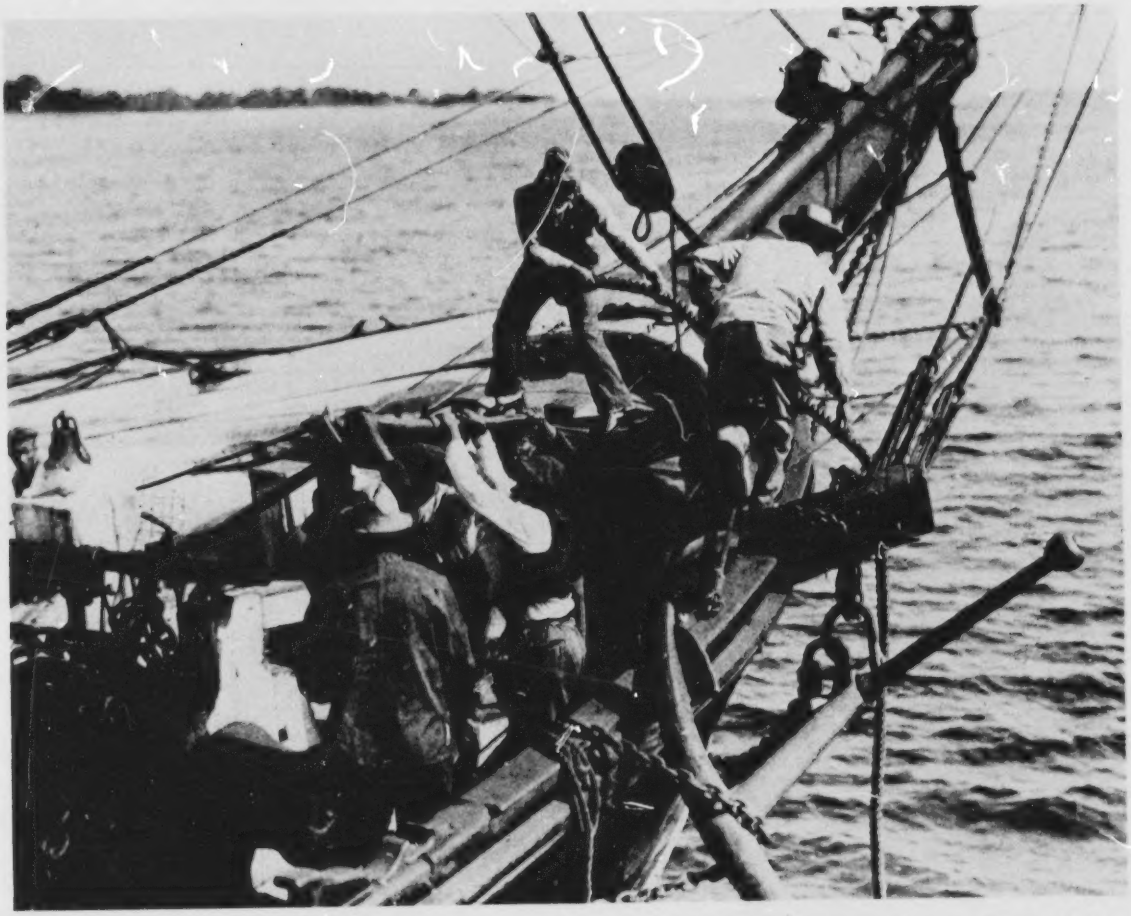
Before the American Revolutionary War, New England whaling ships were sailing off the Cape Verde Islands and picking up crewmen from the Islands and from the West Coast of Africa.

> A large population of the best harpooners, steersmen, and all round whalemen had for long been Portuguese-speaking Africans. . . .In almost all the crews, the African figured very prominently and those from Portuguese West Africa proved particularly outstanding as whalemen. These crewmen, known collectively as Bravas, usually far surpassed all others of whatever racial or national origin.[35]

The frugal Yankee owners actually preferred to recruit men in Cape Verde for the Cape Verdeans "worked hard to save what they could while on board the vessel and they could be hired for much less money than American seamen. Furthermore, they made a disciplined crew."[36]

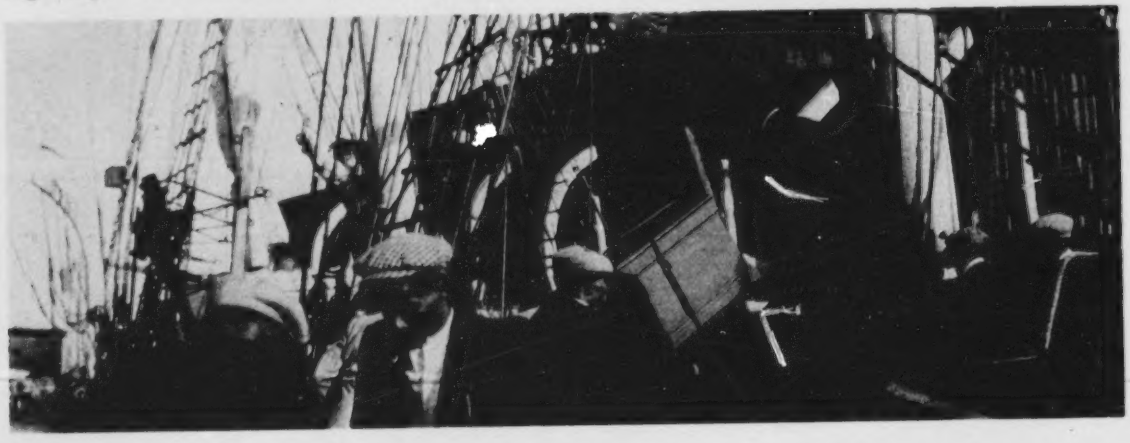


Crew of the bark *Wanderer. Photo O.D.H.S.*



Crew members aboard the *Wanderer* hauling in the lines and making ready for sailing. *Photo © Holcombe.*

For a poor boy in drought stricken Cape Verde, obtaining a berth on an American ship was a dream come true. Already during the first decades of the nineteenth century, three-eighths of the crews of the Nantucket whaling ships were colored.[31] The shantytown where they lived on the outskirts of Nantucket came to be known as "Guinea-Town" or "New Guinea." From about 1825 to 1875, an average of 100 whaleships per year called at the Cape Verde Islands for supplies, men, and recreation.[38]



By the end of the whaling era most of the crews out of New Bedford were Cape Verdeans. The crew of the *Greyhound* loading their gear aboard, 1920. *Photo O. D. H. S.*

The Cape Verdean poet, Jorge Barbosa, wrote of the legacy of the whaleman's contact with Cape Verde.

> Ship Ahoy. ... Ship Ahoy
> Americans are arriving
> Midst the hubbub of the quay
> There are tears of joy
> Fugitive crystals
> Lighting up the women's eyes.
> All have passed by
> -Chinese, negroes, Americans,
> Dutchmen-
> All have passed by
> and casually left
> their race
> in the bellies of the harlots
> of the port[39]

The whalers in turn often contracted venereal disease on the islands; hereditary syphilis was reported endemic in Brava, Fogo, S. Vicente and Sãotiago.[40] Already in 1885, John Rich aboard the *Nancy* of Boston wrote, "we diverted ourselves with the inhabitants" of the islands. The chronicler of the voyage of the ship *Hannibal* spoke of "negro women, who talked to us many smutty English words, making lascivious, undecent gestures with their bodies, which were all naked."[41] The 1849 logbook of the *Mattapoisett* records the crew went ashore "drinking spirits and playing with the wenches."[42] The author of the journal kept aboard the *Chili* "found the rest of them in a little shanty discussing the merits of the aquadients."[43] The Captain of the *Richmond* "finding them intoxicated and very disobedient ... threatened to kill the first man that came to rescue them."[44]

Saturday Aug 18th 1838.

Begins with fresh breezes from the Eastward standing off and on at the Island of St. Nicholas at 5 P.M. the boat came aboard with recruits at about the same time spoke the Ship Cicero of New Bedford with 100 bbls of sperm oil middle part light breezes from the Northward steering S.W. latter part the same at 10 A.M. made the Island of Fogo bearing about S.S.W. Dist 30 miles.

So end these 24 hours. Lat. By obs. 15.36.
Long. Land in sight.

Sunday Aug 19th 1838.

Commences with light breezes from the S.W. steering on the wind under all Sail at 4 P.M. made the Island of Brava, middle and latter part light breezes and calms.

So end these 24 hours. Lat. By Ar. 15. 26

Monday Aug 20th 1838.

Begins with light breezes standing in for Fogo at 5 P.M. one boat went ashore for recruits, middle part [illegible] standing off and on latter part the same at 9 A.M. boat went ashore for recruits at 12 M. came aboard

Manoel

So end these 24 hours. Lat & Long. Land in sight.

Illustrated whaling journal, 1838, recording a ships arrival at São Nicolau and Fogo. *Photo O. D. H. S.*

The bark *Wanderer* of New Bedford on sailing day 1924. Capt. Antone T. Edwards and first mate J. A. Gomes in foreground *Photo O. D. H. S.*

Often undesirable American-born seamen were left behind and more docile men were recruited in the Cape Verde Islands leaving the U.S. Consul the problem of returning the seasick "greenhorn" or troublesome sailor.[45] The whalers frequently took aboard escaped slaves and criminal fugitives which greatly upset the Portuguese authorities.[46] Usually the young men who shipped out were of the lower classes-darker skinned Cape Verdeans. Many times they returned as poor as they left.

The case of a sperm whale hoisted aboard the *Charles W. Morgan. Photo O. D. H. S.*

Whaling itself was a risky occupation. An enraged eighty-five foot whale could smash a whale boat to kindling, killing the crew instantly or dumping them into the sea to be drowned or to be eaten by sharks. Accidents were frequent aboard whaling ships, and the Cape Verdean "hands" did not always escape injury. On one voyage of the *Greyhound*, a whale smashed the third mate's boat and broke the leg of the boatsteerer, Thomas Cliviera, which had to be removed after gangrene set in; Seaman Lopes' ankle was also injured; Steward John Barros died from drinking bad water; and Frank Fereira fell twice from aloft receiving a severe eye injury.

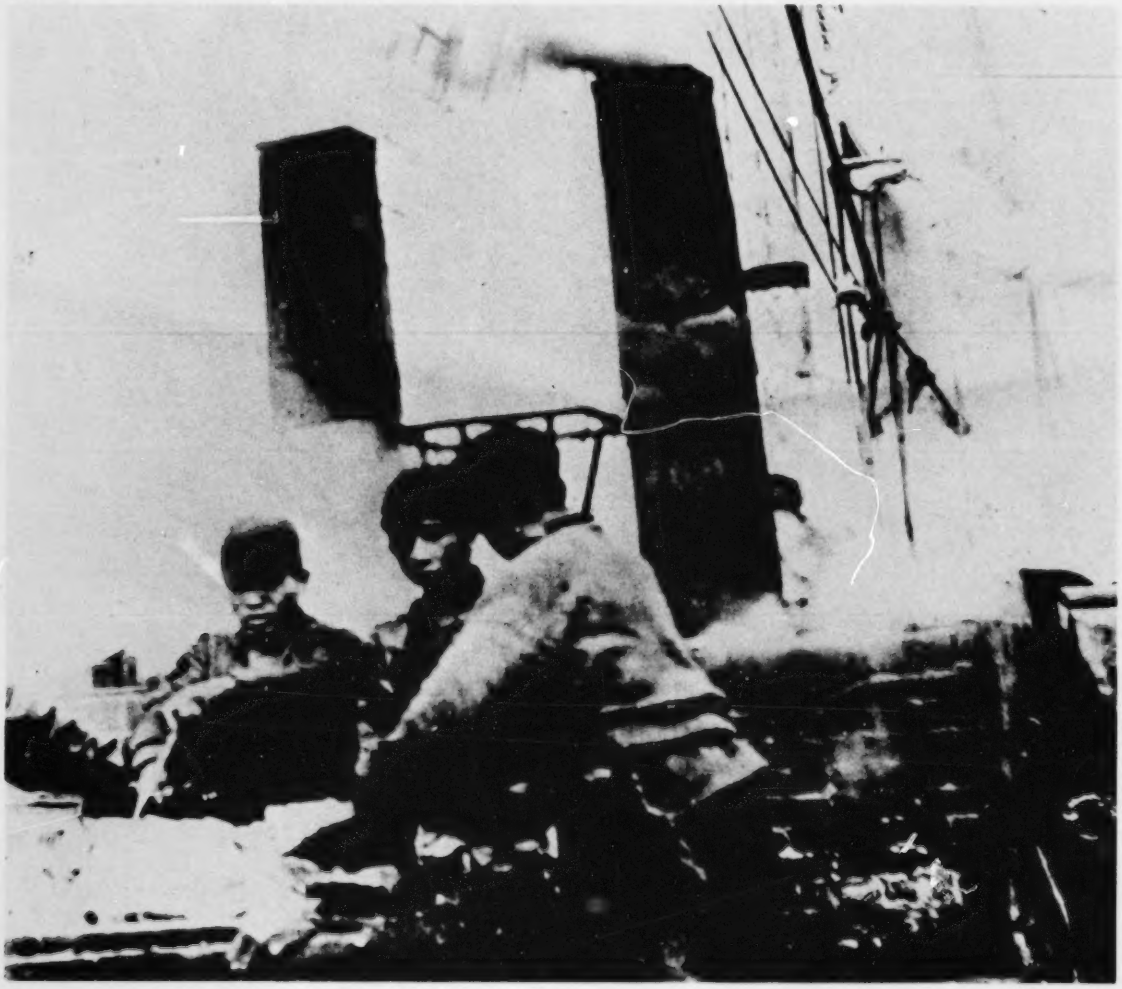
Bark *Greyhound*. *Photo O. D. H. S.*

The mate in charge of one of the whale boats dropped from the *Pedro Varela* with a crew of greenhorns was a black man. "When we get up 'long side the whale those of you out here for the first time'll want to jump overboard on the side opposite the whale. Well don't do it! STAY IN THE BOAT!" The mate steered the frail craft so as to come up behind the big spermwhale, over the dangerous flukes (tail) of the whale. In the bow, the boatsteerer, a Cape Verdean named Antonio, stood poised with the harpoon, ready to hurl it. Suddenly the whale spouted a jet of water and moved to dive. Antonio drove his harpoon deep into the whale and let out a shout of "Fasto!" The mate gave a quick command "Stern All" as all crewmembers pushed hard on their oars to get away from the whale. The tail of the whale rose and flukes smacked the water where the whale boat had been a few seconds before.

"Bailing the case" aboard the *Sunbeam*. Removing the rich oil ladden tissue from the head of the sperm whale. 1904. *Photo O. D. H. S.*

The whale surfaced and started to tow the boat at an incredible speed. Whalemen came to call this spine chilling experience "a Nantucket sleigh ride." Frequently, boats were overturned as they pulled through the waves or a man caught his hand in the line being let out and lost it. The boatsteerer continuously poured water over the rope to prevent the wood from burning and stood by with an axe to cut the line if the whale decided to dive. After a half hour of being towed miles away from the mother ship, the whale slowed down and the whale boat quietly rowed up to the giant sea monster to hurl the fatal lance. The whale immediately became enraged smashing his flukes several times against the surface of the water in order to destroy his attackers, before he dove again. The mate directed the crew to look down in the water; suddenly the enormous head appeared below the surface a hundred feet from the boat "Stern All!" The crew pushed hard as the boat jumped back and the whale shot out of the water directly in front of the skiff. The mate plunged another lance into him, as they maneuvered the boat out of the whale's path. The whale made one more attempt to smash the boat but this time the mate's lance reached the lungs and the water slowly turned red.[47]

After killing the whale came the drudgery. "Of all the ungainly things to tow," said one whaleman "a dead sperm whale is the worst. You could stick your oar two, three times into the same hole in the ocean before making any progress." Then the blubber had to be stripped off the whale before the sharks got to it. This was also dangerous work. Antone Fortes of São Nicolau aboard the *Athlete* stepped between the cutting stage and the whale and lost his leg which ended his whaling career.[48] The blubber was then boiled in large kettles aboard ship. For each whale killed, the men had to toil for several days cutting, stoking the furnace, covered with the whale oil and choked with smoke.



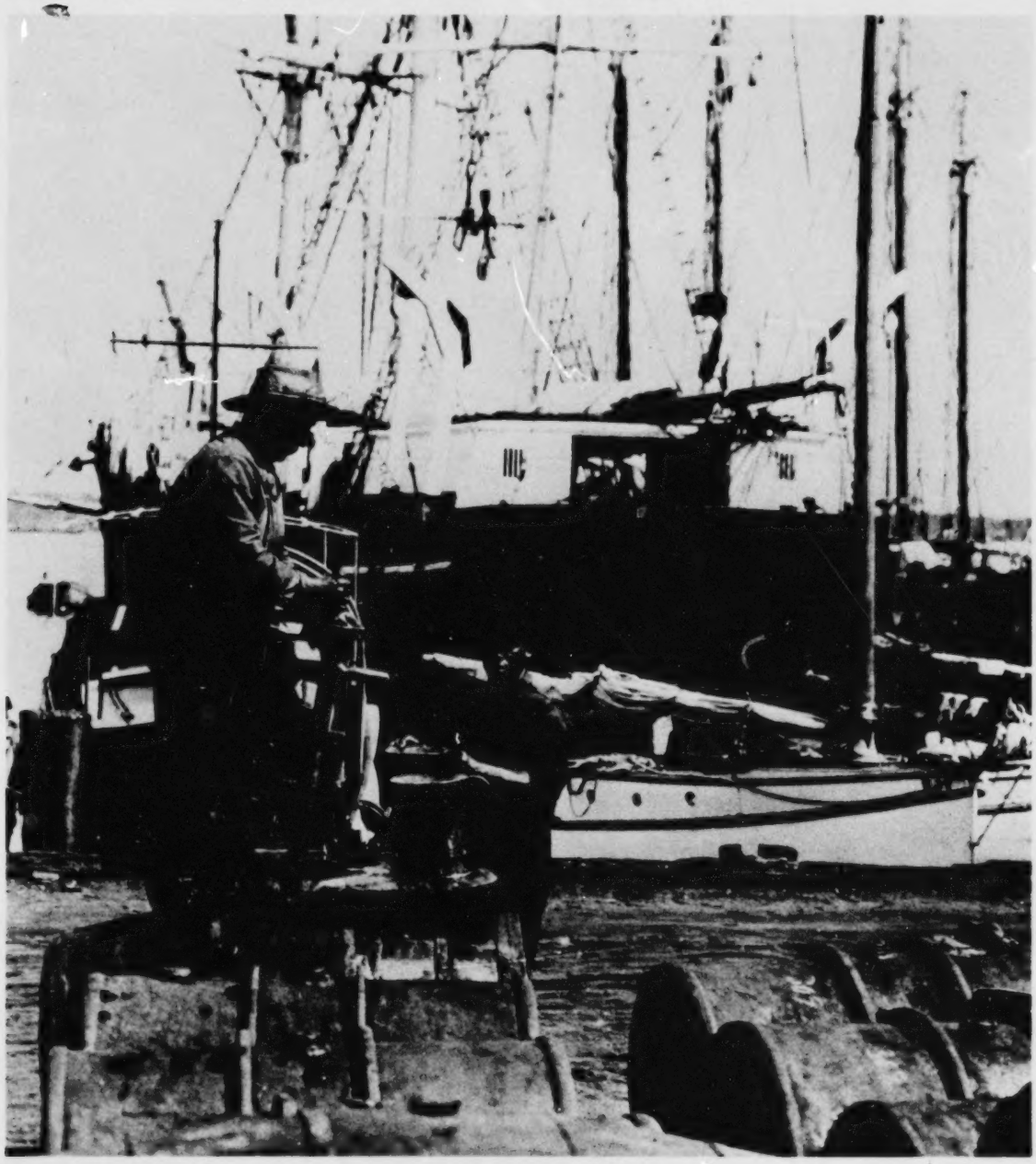
Young boys tending the *try works* aboard the whaler *California*, c. 1903. *Photo M. S. C.*

Whaling was also monotonous, in addition to being dirty and dangerous. For weeks, even months, no whales would be seen. The crew would repair the gear and carve scrimshaw to pass the time. During the periods of calm, food and water became foul and fights among the crew often broke out because of the heat. There was a near mutiny aboard the *Pedro Varela* because of the poor food and bad water. Captains were reluctant to enter major ports for fear their crews would desert them. They often stayed away from home port several years. One Cape Verdean who spent four months on a whaler received only twenty-five dollars for his work as the shoes, clothes and tobacco supplied to him on the ship had been deducted from his pay. The net earnings per voyage of foremast hands in twenty-three voyages made by three representative vessels during the years 1836–79 was $30.47.[49]

Nho Mocho Brito, a Boa Vista seaman, mending the lines aboard the *Ernestina*. *Providence Journal Photo.*

It was not a profession to hold men who had other alternatives. Young white sailors switched to merchant ships or sought their fortunes ashore after one whaling voyage experience. Many Cape Verdean seamen also looked for work in the expanding textile mills of New Bedford, but others returned to sea for there was little racial discrimination aboard the whalers and a man was recognized for his abilities.

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, anyone who completed his first voyage to the satisfaction of the captain had little difficulty in shipping out as a harpooner on his second voyage. Harpooners ranked as officers and it was easy to advance to mate, even without formal schooling, for a harpooner who brought in several whales safely. Many mates could not write up a log (indeed, they often could not even speak English) or navigate with a sextant, but were given the rating of an officer, such was the shortage of skilled seamen towards the end of the whaling era.



Pumping oil on the New Bedford docks. *Photo © Holcombe.*

Manuel Lawrence, captain of the *William Grozier* for instance, was recruited at age thirteen from the island of St. Antão and worked his way up from cabin boy. Captain Valentine Roza, another famous whaler was also a Cape Verdean boy picked up in Brava by a New Bedford whaler. He learned navigation from the wife of the master of the vessel and went on to become master of the *Canton*. Toward the end of the whaling industry Cape Verdeans made up the majority of the crew on most New Bedford whalers. Twenty-six of the thirty-three crewmembers aboard the *Morning Star* were Cape Verdean, twenty-one out of thirty-three on the *Sunbeam*, twenty out of thirty-four aboard the *Josephine*, and fifteen out of sixteen aboard the *Adelia Chase*.

There were great rivalries between the whaling ships. There were often races between the ships to reach the whaling grounds first. Once as one of the whale boats of the *Hicks* was pulling up to a whale, the harpooner of the *Grozier*, Claud Oliviera threw his harpoon forty-two feet to strike the whale first. There was a dispute over the whale, but all agreed it was a remarkable feat.

The Cape Verdeans were universally regarded as "hardworking, honest seamen." When all others abandoned the old sailing ships, the Cape Verdeans bought the decrepit vessels out of their earnings as seamen and kept patching them up with loving care. Eventually, they came to own almost all that remained of the New Bedford fleet, either by purchase or by default. In some cases, they received the ships as outright gifts and "sailed them all over the earth with their own crews and made a modest profit by whaling in the old and tried manner."

Workmen aboard the *Sunbeam*, 1904. *Photo O. D. H. S.*

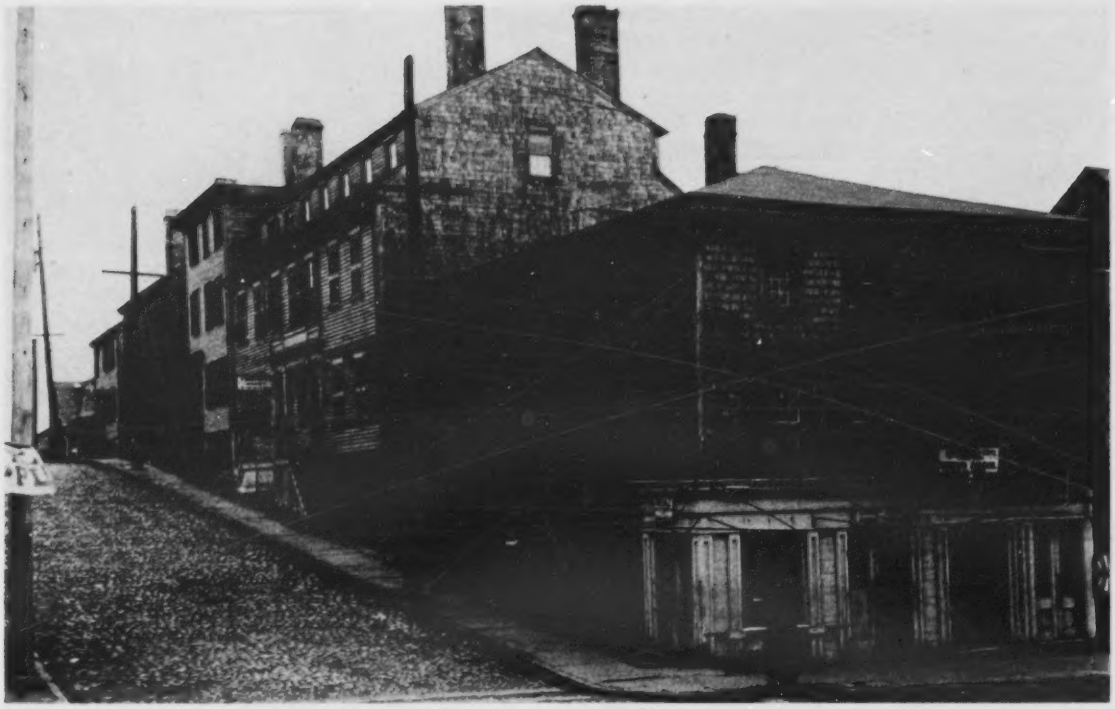
Theophilus Freitas of São Nicolau was captain of the *Pedro Varela* for her last voyage in 1918. He was also mate on the *Charles W. Morgan* which frequently stopped in Cape Verde for provisions and seamen and now remains preserved in the Mystic, Connecticut, seaport. Other Cape Verdean whaling captains of courage and perserverance included Teofilo Gonzalez of Brava, Luis Oliveira, José Senna, Julio Fernandez, and José Perry. Joseph Gomes wrote an autobiography of his whaling adventures, *Captain Joe*, in 1960.[52]

Whaleman Valentine Fermino of São Nicolau who went to sea at age 14 and came to America on the Provincetown whaler *Ellen F. Swift* died recently at the age of 93 in New Bedford.[53] Boatsteerer Joaquim "Jack" Pina who shipped-out in 1900 on the schooner *Adelia Chase* and "never lost a whale" lived to be almost 101.[54] A few Cape Verdean whalers are still around to thrill young people with their tales — Joaquim Almeida of New Bedford and harpooner José Daluz in New York, who still has a big barrel chest and swears that even now he could stop any whale.

Crew members of the bark *Wanderer* pose in front of the wreck of their ship on August 26, 1924. *Photo courtesy Joli Gonsalves.*

## *CHAPTER III*
# THE CAPE VERDEAN- AMERICAN PACKET TRADE

*Hora di bai*. The hour of departure. The *Madalan* pulling away from the pier at Providence on her return trip to Cape Verde. 1957. *Photo Joseph Latham. Courtesy R.I. Dept. of State Library Services.*



East Side or Bethel St., New Bedford, 1903. These dockside lodging houses were home to many whaling crews and immigrant workers. *Photo O. D. H. S.*

By the early 1800's Cape Verdean seamen were settling in New Bedford, which had come to replace Nantucket as New England's foremost whaling port.[55] Crew lists[56] of the mid-nineteenth century show that they were coming from all over the Cape Verde Islands, notably from São Nicolau, Santo Antão, Maio, and Brava. Photographs of the day show that they were of dark skin color. As Chapter III will explain, most were from the desperately poor, landless class.

Between stints at sea, the Cape Verdeans stayed in flophouses near the docks. Many eventually took dockside jobs associated with shipping or shipbuilding. Cape Verdeans worked as rigers, dockworkers, and coopers,[57] among other things. In addition, they provided the bulk of the work force in the New Bedford rope works.[58]

A Cape Verdean cooper (barrel maker) heading an oil cask on Merrill's Wharf, New Bedford c. 1905. *Photo O. D. H. S.*

The port of Furna, Brava at the height of the packet trade (1908). Most of the schooners and old whalers which regularly called at Furna were owned by Cape Verdean-Americans.

As steamships replaced sailing vessels, old schooners and whalers were plentiful and available for the asking. At the same time, cheap labor was required for the expanding textile mills and cranberry industry of southern New England. Cape Verdeans bought the windjammers in order to bring their countrymen to America to toil in the cranberry bogs of Cape Cod and the mills of New Bedford. During the height of the packet trade years, ten or more ships made the annual trip between southeastern New England and the Cape Verde Islands. ("Packet" refers to a regularly scheduled ship which carries cargo, mail, and passengers.) They usually arrived in the early summer before the cranberry season began and returned after the harvest in the fall, carrying clothing, household goods, roof tiles, and other American made products back to the Islands. Since most of these ships, during this period, left from the island of Brava, the trade became known as the "Brava Packet Trade."

The importance of the packets was far more than commercial. It was these fragile vessels, above all else, that nurtured a "Cape Verdean-American connection," making it possible for new immigrants to resolve a dilemma that deeply concerned many of them: how to make a new life for oneself in America without abandoning those left behind in the homeland. For one thing the packets made visits home a possibility and this kept alive the dream many held dear of returning one day to live in the Islands as a prosperous *mercano* (American). For another, the packets

Capt. José Manuel Lopes and his first mate Francisco Rosario aboard the *Capitana* in Dakar after a long voyage from New England in 1942. *(Photo courtesy Capt. Lopes).*

allowed the immigrants to provide most of life's necessities—and some luxuries—to relatives in their home island. These "floating shipwrecks"[59] as one Yankee observer called them, were a lifeline between the immigrants and those who remained in Cape Verde. For the latter, they brought the material goods necessary for physical life, but, just as importantly, for the lonely "greenhorn" the packets enabled him to stay in contact with home and with the way of life that was part of his very identity. This chapter tells the story of the best-remembered ships and the Cape Verdean men, women, and children who risked their lives on them.

Wickenden Street in the Fox Point section of Providence. Cape Verdeans settled in this community in large numbers until World War II. *Photo R.I. Dept. of State Library Services.*

*The Nellie May*

Antonio Coelho was the first Cape Verdean-American to purchase a vessel to begin the Packet Trade. He bought the *Nellie May*, a 64-ton fishing schooner, from John Waters of Newport, hired an old whaleman as captain, and sailed in 1892 from Providence for Brava. Fifty people paid fifteen dollars each for the passage. Only a few days out at sea the captain died of a heat seizure. The mate knew nothing about navigation but tried to steer a course in the general direction of Cape Verde. After a month, they encountered a steamer and learned that they had passed the islands by some 500 miles south. Finally, after forty-five days at sea, they reached the harbor of Furna in Brava. Coelho hired a new captain and sailed back with the *Nellie May* to Providence in the spring of the next year. With 117 passengers and crew aboard, the schooner arrived 28 days later. With the money gained from the trip, Coelho became an important person in the Fox Point, R.I. community.

In 1893 the *Nellie May* made another round trip, this time with Captain José Godinho in command. The passage to the Cape Verde Islands took ninety days—one of the most terrible on record for its length and for the suffering endured by passengers and crew. Food and water ran out. Two of the crew went mad and jumped overboard. The captain felt that he had not been properly compensated for his troubles and is said to have beached the ship so he could buy the *Nellie May* at auction as an abandoned ship. Coelho took his case to Presidents Cleveland and McKinley in an effort to secure the return of his ship. For two years the State Department attempted to clarify the situation.[60] Coelho died at age 92 in Providence without receiving any compensation.

*Captain Henry Rose and the "Queen of the Cape Verde Packets"*

One of the most colorful Cape Verdean captains was Henry Rose. Captain Rose made his first trip from Brava to America in 1911 at age thirteen as a messboy on the bark *Charles G. Rice*.[61] He made two more trips on the *Rice*, and one on the *Diane* out of New Bedford. Captain Rose then sailed as mate under Captain José Silva on the *Emma* and *Helen*. At age 21, he was made master of the *Pythian* and took her to Cape Verde. In 1922, he was master of the schooner *Volante*. In the middle of the Atlantic, while a young crewman on his first voyage was at the wheel, the boat suddenly jibed and the swinging boom knocked Captain Rose overboard. No one on board knew what to do. For twenty minutes Rose hung onto the log-line and shouted instructions to the crew. Finally after he had spent two hours swimming in the cold Atlantic, they were able to turn the schooner and pick up their captain. Nonetheless, the *Volante* reached S. Vicente in 19 days—record time!

Henry Rose, however, had his best days aboard the *Valkyria*, a two-masted former whaler which he commanded from 1923 to 1936.[62] He made fourteen crossings in her, and claimed he made one voyage in twelve days. She was solidly built as she proved in the 1923 crossing when for ten days she successfully battled a hurricane. (Rose's cabin was flooded.) Rose threw 50 tons of cargo overboard but arrived safely in Brava with his 32 passengers—after forty-five days at sea. On April 9, 1924, the *Valkyria* and her rival the *Yukon* sailed from Brava together and arrived the same day, May 13, in Providence. Capt. Benjamin Costa, former master of the *Valkyria*, was captain of the *Yukon*. For the return voyage, a wager of $1,500 was arranged to prove who had the fastest vessel. The two vessels and the *William A. Graber*, under Capt. John Sousa, left Providence on October 19, 1924. The *Valkyria* carried seven passengers and seventeen seamen, while the *Yukon* had fifteen passengers and 26 crewmembers. The *Valkyria* won arriving on November 13, and remained the undisputed *Queen of the Cape Verde Packets* until 1926.

During the night of November , 1926, the *Valkyria* struck a derelict vessel. The collision brought down the foremast and, eventually, the main mast and opened the stem. Capt. Rose tried to hack away the rigging and masts which were pounding against the sides of the boat and tried to lighten the *Valkyria* in order to bring her three or four feet out of the water. Two seamen were swept overboard during the attempt. For two days, she drifted, a helpless wreck; but finally her crew of fifteen men along with two young girls were rescued by a passing British tanker. In 1926, Capt. Rose took over the *Manta*, the last active whaler out of New Bedford. He made five trips with her, the worst of which was in January, 1928 when she ran into such bad calms that it took 53 days to go from Providence to São Vicente. (For days they could see the mountain peaks of Santo Antao but could only sail 50 miles in 7 days). In 1932 it took Rose seventy harrowing days to get to Cape Verde on the four-master *Ellen S. Little*. Three days out of Brava, desperately short of food and water, his passengers had to raise $700 cash before a passing steamer would tow them to port.[63]

The *John R. Manta* at Merrill's W

In 1929, 17 year old John J. Barros took the *Manta* back to Providence; but he ran her aground off the Nantucket Shoals. Four of the crew set out in a boat for help but, terrified of the breakers, turned back. Another party succeeded in summoning two trawlers to pull the *Manta* off and tow her to Vineyard Haven. The Coast Guard, suspecting illegal immigrants might be aboard, sent several agents to investigate and discovered eleven unfortunate aliens hiding below decks in the bilges. The *Manta* was fined and auctioned off.

rf in New Bedford. *Photo O. D. H. S.*

Frank Silva, the owner of the *Valkyria*, bought her for $3,800 on August 6, 1929. She continued in the island packet trade for several years.

The *Adelaide T. Carlton* arriving at São Vicente, c. 1924. *Photo courtesy of Armando Perry.*

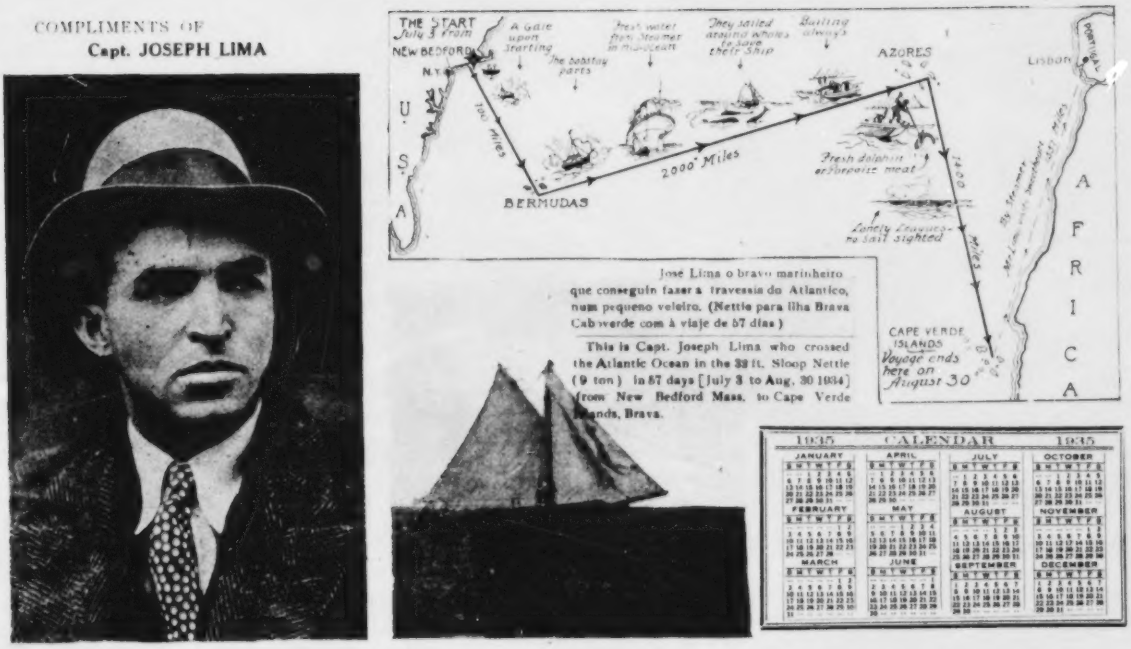
*The Loss of the Manta and the Winnepesauke*

Capt. Albertino de Senna brought the *Manta* to Providence in 1934.[64] After a summer spent in refitting and re-rigging the old ship, the *Manta* sailed from Providence for Brava on November 8, 1934 with a crew of nineteen and thirteen passengers, including three women and six children, and a Guernsey heifer. A week before Christmas, the newspapers noted that the *Manta* was 39 days out of Providence and still unreported "but supposedly winging her way to Brava." By mid-January, the relatives and friends began to worry since no word was received from Cape Verde that she had arrived. Severe storms had been reported in the Atlantic. Two packets, the *Winnepesauke* and the *Trenton*, had also sailed from New Bedford and had failed to reach Brava. The *Trenton*, an old New York pilot schooner eventually made port, but the *Winnepesauke* was lost with all hands.[65] The last hope for the *Manta* and her passengers was abandoned on February 24, 1935 when the vessel had been missing for 107 days.[66]

Another tragedy still remembered today in Cape Verde is the loss of the *Mathilde*.[67] In 1943 a group of men in Brava, some born in America, others emigrants returned for a visit, and still others going to the United States for the first time, bought a fifty-five foot sloop, *Mathilde*, to sail to New England. In so doing they hoped both to escape the famine raging in the Islands and send relief to those left behind as well as to volunteer for military service in the war. By this time World War II had brought a suspension to the packet trade, given the danger of encountering German submarines.

After only minimal repairs to the vessel, the men set sail from one of Brava's more secluded harbors on August 21, 1943. Their voyage was "unofficial," that is to say technically a clandestine one, because of wartime restrictions on maritime travel as well as the probably substandard condition of the *Mathilde*. To make matters worse, the voyage coincided with the beginning of the hurricane season in September.

Humberto Balla, then 12 years old, was aboard the *Mathilde*, accompanying his older brother. He could see that the boat was already leaking even before she was far out of port. Frightened, the boy jumped overboard and swam thirty minutes until he reached shore. There he wept as he watched the sloop disappear over the horizon, carrying his compatriots to what he knew was certain death. It is believed that the *Mathilde*, with her twenty brave crewmen, went down in rough weather near Bermuda.




Captain José Lima crossed the Atlantic in the 32 foot sloop *Nettie*. In 1935 the nine ton vessel made the heroic voyage between New Bedford and Brava in 57 days.

*Captain John*

One of the famous captains of the Cape Verde Packet Trade was John Sousa of Brava. At age six he lost his father. His mother being poor, he went to live with his uncle Captain John Zurich of São Nicolau. Zurich taught him sailing and navigation, and by age twelve Sousa was running a small boat between the islands with his cousins. At eighteen he was made captain of one of Zurich's ships to America. For most of the next forty years, he made annual trips to New England and carried salt to the Gambia, wood and rice from Bissau to Cape Verde, and passengers to Dakar. In 1929 he took his whole family to the U.S. in the *William Grabner* and lived there for fourteen months before he was denounced by fellow Cape Verdeans for bringing in immigrants illegally. Sousa departed on the first ship available. Some time later, his family returned aboard the *William Grabner* on a long 46-day journey to Cape Verde.[68]

The family was finally re-united in São Vicente, but Captain John must have caused them many a worry thereafter. Once he was considered lost after three months at sea between America and São Nicolau. Another time while sailing the *Atlanta* to the United States he lost two masts and the rudder in a storm and made his way back to Cape Verde with a jury-rigged[69] sail and steering device. Yet another time, between Cape Verde and Bermuda, he had to abandon ship in a cyclone but he was rescued by a passing boat. Sousa lost still another ship on her maiden voyage between São Vicente and São Nicolau. At fifty-six he retired from the sea and established a small farm in Fogo, where he also maintained his shipping business.

People who knew Captain John describe him as courageous yet calm in adversity. Even on his deathbed in 1958, at seventy-five years of age, he fought the wind and sea, calling to his cousin to "pull in the sheets because the wind is picking up."

Captain John Sousa. *Photo Texeira da Sousa.*

*Roy Teixeira and the "Coriolanus"*

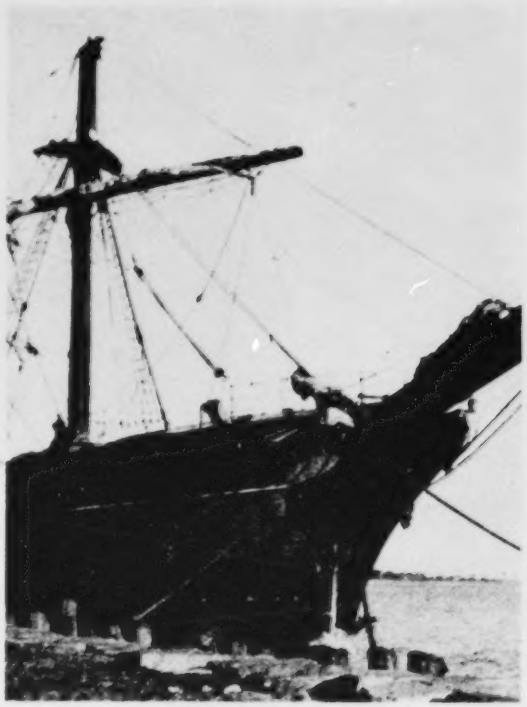
Roy Teixeira, owner of the largest and finest Cape Verde packet ship, the *Coriolanus*, came to the United States at age sixteen.[70] He worked at low-paying jobs in the textile mills. After serving in the U.S. Army in France, Teixeira returned to America determined to save his money and make his mark. In 1920 he bought the schooner *Romance* for a mere pittance. The schooner made three trips to the Cape Verde Islands bringing fifty cranberry pickers each April, and returning them to the islands after the harvest. Teixeira's next ship was the *Thomas Lawrence*,[71] soon after traded for the three masted schooner *Fairhaven*. In 1926 the *Fairhaven* came into New Bedford with twenty two Cape Verdeans without papers. The illegal aliens were ordered to remain aboard but during the night left the ship so Teixeira was fined $22,000 for violating U.S. immigration laws. The government sold the ship at auction for $500, and she was scrapped.[72] In 1929 Teixeira joined with Albio and Antonio Macedo in acquiring the 300-foot *Coriolanus*.[73] She was a luxury ship by comparison with the other Cape Verde packets, carrying 200 passengers plus crew.[74] The ship had tiled bathrooms, electric light, a radio, and a paid orchestra aboard, as well as a newspaper listing the daily activities. There were constant celebrations, such as the "christening" of the crew's pet monkey. (The ill-fated monkey perished when he fell from a yardarm in a storm.)

Teixeira decided to take his new bride to his homeland on the *Coriolanus*. What began as a pleasant voyage was not without a few challenges. Several days out they ran into a storm during the night. The cargo shifted and the ship would not right itself. Captain Sena was afraid to jettison the trucks and crates on deck on his own authority and so awoke Teixeira who immediately ordered the vehicles and the cargo on the leeward side thrown over. Slowly the ship began to right herself, and all were saved. Just a few days out of Sao Vicente an old man, who was going back to retire in the islands, died. A brief ceremony was held for him and he was buried at sea.[75]

Teixeira had the *Coriolanus* for several more years. Towards the end, she made a record passage from New Bedford to Santo Antao in seventeen and one-half days, in spite of being becalmed for three days in the doldrums. On the return trip from Fogo with eight passengers and a crew of 38 men, she was struck by a squall which brought down some of her upper rigging, leaving it in a tangled heap on deck. Her crew fought to save her, cutting away the broken spars as raging seas swept across her rails. The ex-clipper was still seaworthy, and she limped to New Bedford under shortened canvas. When she docked there on September 11th, 1930, her sailing days were over.[76]

Teixeira owned one other large sailing vessel, the *Augusta Hilton*, which carried lumber from Florida to the Canaries and Cape Verde. She was a four-masted schooner but carried only a few passengers. In 1932 Teixeira took his family, including two young sons, to Cape Verde on the *August Hilton*. Before leaving Florida they ran aground, but a tug working nearby was able to pull them off. The crew lassoed sharks to pass the time. Once the vessel ran into a calm, Teixeira Sr. recalls that the dead sharks frightened Roy Junior. Carlos, the younger son, enjoyed the sea voyage and later became a seaman carrying on the maritime tradition of the family.

For over half a century, Roy Teixeira and his family have figured prominently in Cape Verdean-American life. Besides being a shipowner, Teixeira was also legal counsel to Henrique Mendes, John Pontes, and most of the other Cape Verdean captains and owners. Known as "Lawyer Teixeira," he assisted them whenever they had difficulties with immigration officials and thereby became responsible for the entry of thousands of Cape Verdeans into the United States.



The *Coriolanus* moored at New Bedford immediately after losing her foremast en route from Cape Verde in September 1930. *Photo courtesy M. Platzer.*

*John Costa*

John Costa, like many other Cape Verdean mariners, followed in his father Benjamin's footsteps to work at sea.[77] Benjamin Costa owned and sailed many ships between the Cape Verde Islands and New England, including the *Platina*, the *Mystic*, the *Frank Brainard*, and the *Yukon*. When John was 14 years old, he joined his father on the *Yukon*. By 18 he already had his mates' license and took the *Yukon*, a fast ship and his favorite, to the West Coast of Africa.

In 1931, John Costa shipped out as first mate on the *John Manta* with Capt. Albertino Sena, but the *Manta* was a bad-luck ship. On the return voyage from Providence, they encountered a storm, and Costa ordered the sails down. The Captain, however, came on deck and ordered the sails back up. They raised the sails again only to see them shredded immediately, it took a week to repair them. Arriving in the islands, they were late casting off from Brava for São Vicente. The shore line was not released in time and it snapped, cutting off Costa's hand. For twenty hours the man agonized. When the *Manta* arrived in São Vicente, his arm had to be amputated. The same year the *Manta* was lost at sea with its thirteen passengers and a crew of nineteen.

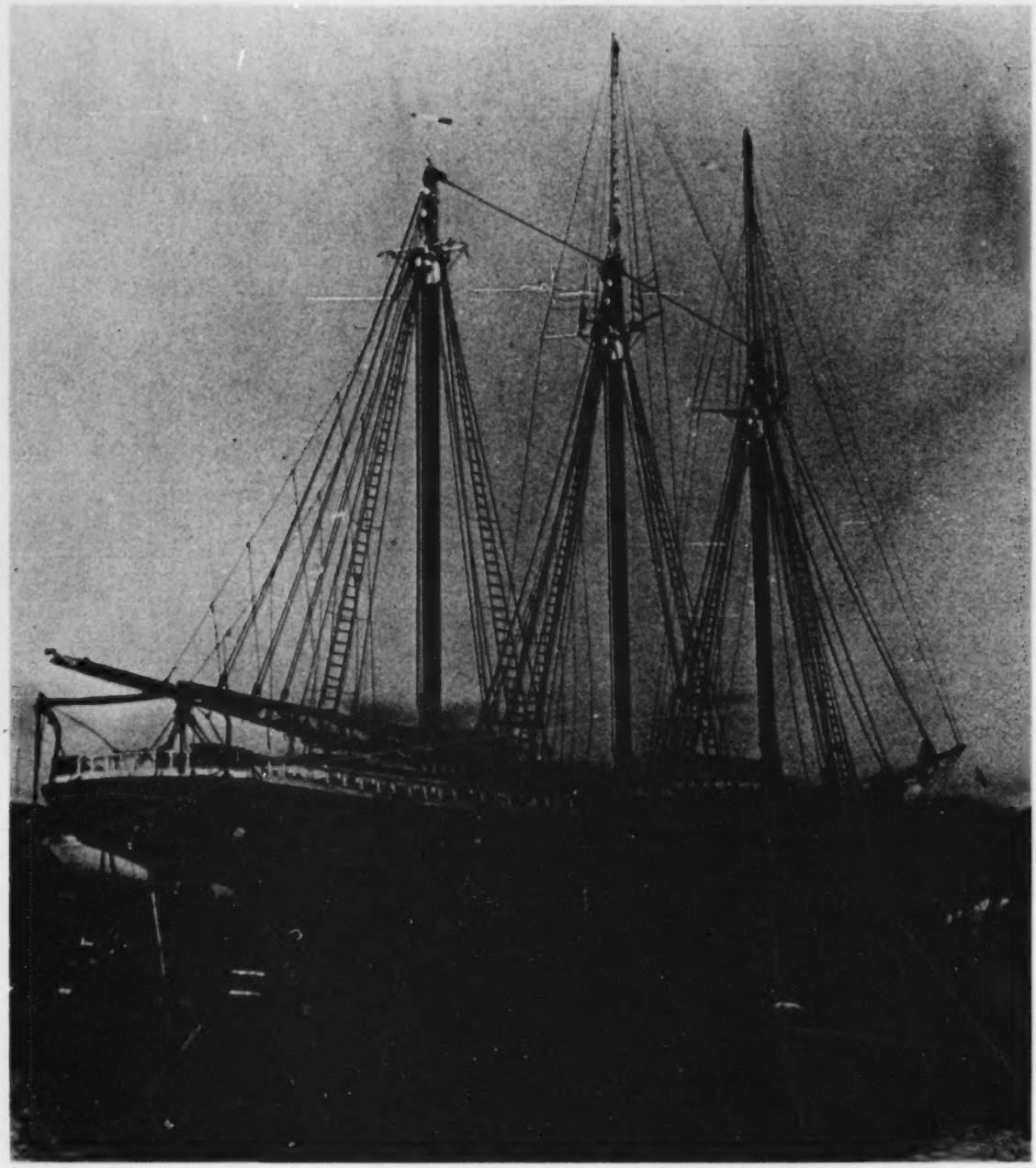
Costa did not give up his sea career but instead joined the *Burkeland*[78] as first mate, under Capt. Julio Almada of São Nicolau, until taking over his father's shipping business. In 1939, he acquired the *Corona*, a beautiful steel sloop designed by the famous naval architect Herreshoff.[79] His return to the Islands was delayed by immigration authorities because America was now preparing for war and would not allow U.S. citizens to ship out. Eventually, Costa spent the war working on a WPA project in New Bedford until he was sent to the Cape Verde Islands to buy tunafish for the U.S. Government. After the war, moved by the plight of his countrymen, he decided to buy a schooner and reactivate the Cape Verdean packet trade in order to bring needed supplies, food, and clothing to the islands. To this end he purchased the *Lucy Evelyn* in partnership with Augusto Teixeira for $10,000 and another $5,000 in repairs. The *Lucy Evelyn* was the last commercially operated three-masted schooner in New England.[80]

He now set out to get cargo. This proved difficult, for many Cape Verdeans who wanted to send goods were skeptical that anyone would really make an ocean voyage in a sailing ship. He literally had to set his sails as if preparing to leave and allow the Cape Verdeans to place their bundles aboard the ship themselves. Soon the ship was full with thirteen thousand feet of pine lumber and twenty tons of cement for a new Nazarene church in Praia, a piano, household goods for the pastor, two hundred drums of kerosene, three automobiles, canned food, and bundles of clothing for relatives in Cape Verde.[81] Two paying passengers signed on along with a crew of twelve. One of the passengers, Mrs. Teresa Neves, 60 years old, lost a sister on the *Manta* but decided to risk the voyage. None of the crew had ever served on a sailing vessel, so no one would go aloft to set the sails.[82] On May 9, 1946 the *Evelyn* was towed out of New Bedford harbor, but nonetheless arrived safely in Cape Verde thirty-four days later.

The return to the United States was a real test of Costa's ability and endurance.[83] He left Dakar on September 20, with twenty-one passengers, including ten women and five children, a "crew" of twenty-eight, and two hundred and fifty tons of salt. When she was in the middle of the Atlantic, a heavy gale smashed the rudder and brought down the mizzenboom. Costa worked feverishly to improvise an apparatus of wires to repair the crippled rudder. The *Evelyn* was only 280 miles from Block Island, Rhode Island when a second storm struck on November 5, and drove her back to a point 250 miles east of Currituck, North Carolina. Unable to hold a course, the Coast Guard picked up the *Evelyn* and towed her into Norfolk, Virginia on November 22, 63 days after her departure from Dakar.

The *Evelyn* was repaired and on February 15, 1947 she set out for New Bedford. On February 21, after the Vineyard Sound Lightship had been sighted, a blinding blizzard hit. Visibility dropped to zero in minutes, and just as quickly the howling northeast wind shredded the mainsail and the jib. Captain Costa ran for deep water under the foresail alone, and before the winter gale was over the *Evelyn* found herself off the Georges Banks. On February 27, the Coast Guard cutter *Legare* picked her up and started towing her back, but rough seas caused the towline to break several times. On March 2, the *Legare* was relieved by the larger cutter *Algonquin*, but as they approached Gay Head another winter gale struck. In the early morning hours of March 3, four miles west of Cuttyhunk, the tow line broke again, and the Algonquin lost the *Evelyn* in the blizzard. On her own in raging seas before 60 mile an hour winds, the *Evelyn* was drifting into shoal waters. Captain Costa ordered the anchor dropped but the chain broke immediately. A second anchor held one half mile from the beach of Mattapoisett, and the next morning, the storm over, a tug towed her to New Bedford City Pier.

In late June the *Evelyn* set out for Cape Verde again with ten passengers and a gene-



The *Lucy Evelyn* in dry dock, Newport. *Photo John Costa.*

ral cargo. The elements were kind to Captain Costa on that voyage but the trip to the United States the next year was similar to the earlier ones. In March 1948 he left Praia for New Bedford via Dakar with seven paying passengers, but the winds prevented her eastward journey. Captain Costa discharged the passengers at Fogo and headed directly for America. Soon after leaving, a storm opened up a seam in her bow. With no gasoline aboard for the pump, the crew had to pump the bilges by hand the entire way across the Atlantic. A month out of Cape Verde, they ran out of flour and by the time she reached New Bedford on April 12, 1948, most of the other food was also gone. Upon arrival, the crew sued for wages. After evaluating the long history of the *Evelyn*'s misfortunes, Costa and Teixeira decided to sell the schooner for as much as they could get—$1550.

*The Madalan*

John B. Pontes, a Boston Cape Verdean businessman, and his business associate Fortunato Gomes da Pina, despite seeing the problems of Costa and Texeira, decided carrying cargo to Cape Verde could still be profitable. In November 1946, they bought for $35,000 the former luxury steel yacht *Illyria*, which had been used for Coast Guard service during World War II and was now considered surplus.[73] The Cape Verde Packet Trade had never seen such a fine vessel. She had been built of steel and teak wood in 1928 in Italy, boasting four double cabins, a library, and sitting room, besides the captain's and crew's quarters. Pontes renamed her *Madalan*, had her rerigged and the partitions ripped out below decks for cargo space, and hired Captain Sebastian Cruz.[84]

The *Madalan* left Providence on June 8, 1947, with twenty passengers, among them one woman—Mrs. Minnie Correira of California who had come to the U.S. over thirty years before on a sailing ship. It was a calm crossing and seventy-four days passed before the *Madalan* arrived in Cape Verde. She had a new engine, but Pontes would not allow it to be used because it was too expensive to operate! The return voyage to Providence was a good deal faster, taking only thirty-nine days from Dakar. After staying in New England for Christmas and New Year, she attempted a winter crossing in January 1948. Five days out of port, the *Madalan* ran into the start of a week of gales that drove her 130 miles a day with no sails. Yet apart from the three kerosene drums and a barrel of beef that were washed overboard, the brigantine came through without damage.[85]

The *Madalan* was back in Providence on July 27, 1948, with forty two passengers after making a forty-eight day crossing from Dakar despite seventeen days of calm. In order to have fresh meat during the voyage, a stock pen had been built under the forecastle to shelter hogs, cows, and sheep. The comfortable conditions aboard the *Madalan* had made her a popular ship, and so every year thereafter the *Madalan* returned in July and left in autumn after the cranberry harvest, when many Cape Verdean cranberry pickers would book passage home to visit family and friends.[86] Second Mate John Baptiste, Jr., boasted "She's the finest ship ever to sail in the trade."

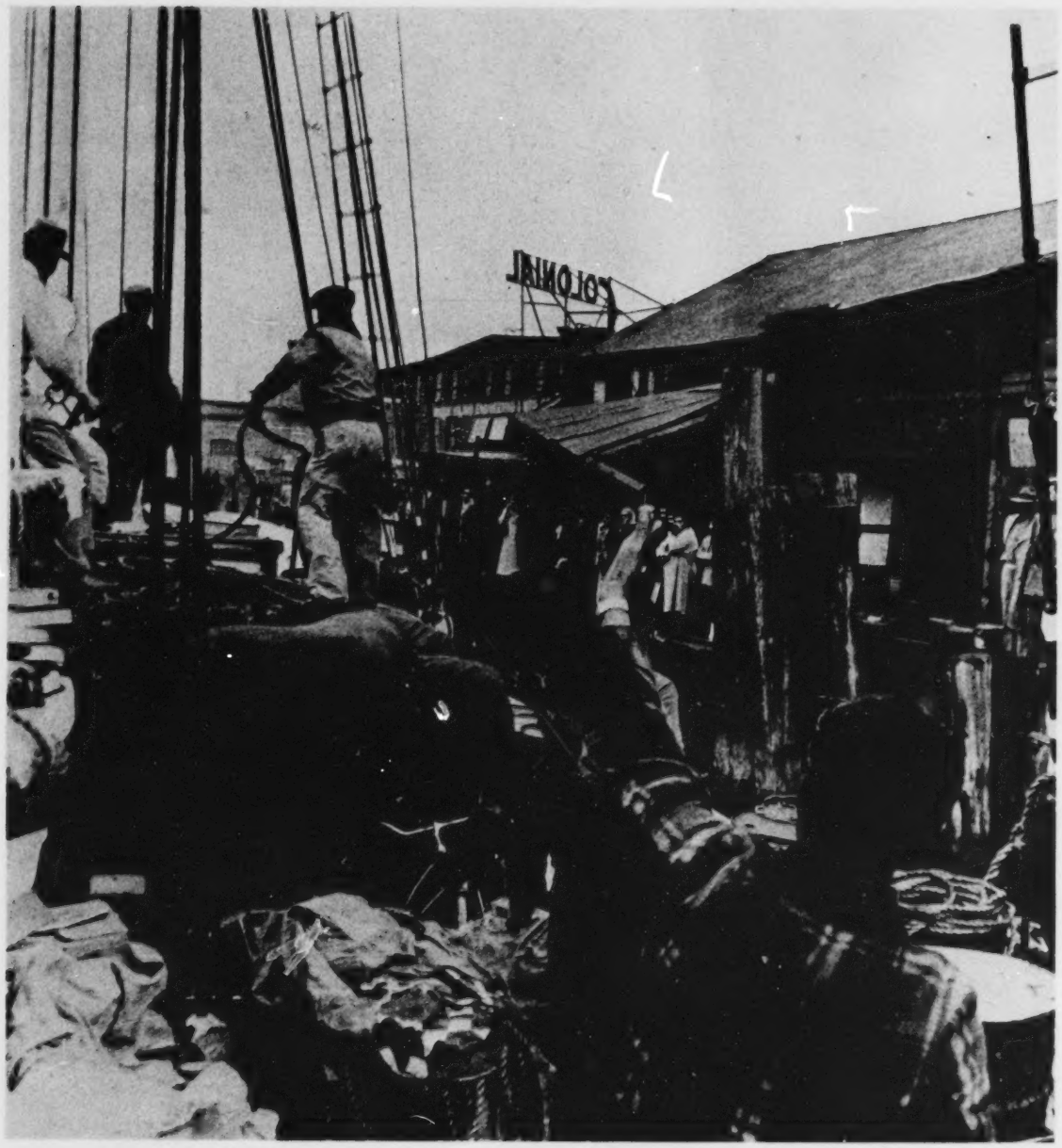
She was also a lucky one. On a crossing to Cape Verde in January 1954 the mate John Brites was washed overboard by a wave; the next wave washed him back aboard, unhurt! Good fortune indeed smiled on the *Madalan* until she was sold to Antonio Bento of Maio who neglected her. In 1955 she broke loose in the harbor of Praia and was driven against the rocks. The *Providence Journal* reported in 1957 that "Antonio Bento can't or won't spend money for necessary repairs on leaks in her steel hull and on her sprung topsail." Sometime later, unattended, she developed a leak and sank.

*Henrique Mendes and the "Ernestina"*

The rival of the *Madalan* was the *Ernestina*, a two masted schooner, owned and operated by Henrique Mendes.[87] At age 18, Mendes ran away from his home in Fogo and sailed for New Bedford on the schooner *Serpa Pinto*, arriving on May 2, 1898. In Providence he shoveled coal at twenty-six cents an hour for several months then decided to ship out on a whaler. He was made a harpooner on his first voyage and brought in a sixty barrel whale. Thirteen dollars for six months proved to be too little money for Mendes. He left whaling and alternately worked as a deckhand aboard coastal schooners, took odd jobs ashore, kept a store in Wareham, and picked cranberries. It is said that "he lived to save his money." After five years in the United States he made an agreement with a cranberry bog owner to bring forty contract workers from Cape Verde and was advanced the rest of the money needed to purchase his first vessel. Mendes went on to own thirty different vessels in succession, all of them old and dilapidated. Several were lost in the Atlantic. Undaunted Mendes went ashore following each calamity to work and to save money for another vessel. He once bought the old barkentine *Savoya* for $8,000 in Baltimore and sold her a few years later for $15,000. While he had her he said, "She carry plenty passengers, make plenty money."

The Second World War halted the Cape Verde Packet trade, but as soon as it was over, Henrique bought the famous artic exploration ship *Effie Morrissey*, which had sunk in Flushing, New York.[88] The old schooner was raised and sold to Henrique's daughter-in-law, Louisa Mendes, for $7,000.[89] He repaired her in New Bedford and rechristened her *Ernestina*. For the next twenty years she sailed regularly between Providence and Cape Verde.[90] The seasonal arrival of the *Madalan* and *Ernestina*, timed to coincide with the harvest of the cranberries, was a joyous occasion for the Cape Verdeans of New England.[91] Hundreds would come to the dock to greet the vessels, hear the news about friends living in the islands, celebrate aboard the ship drinking sugar cane "grog" and dancing to the "mornas" played by the crew. The *Ernestina* would receive goods all summer for shipment to relatives in the islands. In the fall the

*Nho Antoninho* "inspecting" the *Madalan* on sailing day in the early 1950's. Antonio Francisco Nacimento of Santo Antão worked as a whaler when he first came to America in 1917. In his youth he worked as a longshoreman on the docks of Providence, R. I. Like many of his transplanted countrymen he would spend long hours at the docks whenever a packet arrived from Cape Verde. *Photo Joseph Latham courtesy R. I. Dept. of State Library Services).*




The *Ernestina* leaving The Port of Providence c. 1957. *Photo Providence Journal.*

**MORNA DE DESPEDIDA**

Hora de bai,
Hora de dor,
Ja'n q'rê
Pa el ca manchê
De cada bez
Que 'n ta lembrâ,
Ma'n q'rê
Fica 'n morré

Hora de bai,
Hora de dor
Amor,
Dixa 'n tchorâ
Corpo catibo,
Bá bó que ê escrabo
Ó alma bibo,
Quem que al lebabo?

Se bem ê dóce,
Bai ê magoado;
Más, se ca bado,
Ca ta birado
Se no morré
Na despedida,
Senor Dés na volta
Tâ dano bida.

Dixam tchorâ
Destino de home:
Es dor
Que câ tem nome:

Dor de cretcheu,
Dor de sodade
De alguem
Que'n q'rê, que q'rêm...

Dixam tchorâ
Destino de home,
Oh Dor
Que câ tem nome
Sofri na vista
Se tem certeza,
Morré na auséncia,
Na bo tristeza.

— Eugenio Tavares

Eugenio Tavares, Cape Verdean poet.

## "Morna of Farewell"

Hour of departure,
Hour of grief,
Would that it
Might never dawn!
Every time I remember it,
I want to
Lie down and die!

Hour of departure,
Hour of grief!
My love,
Let me weep!
Captive body,
Go thou, slave!
O living soul,
Who dares carry you off?

If coming home is sweet
Departing is bitter.
Yet, if one doesn't leave
One can never return.
If we die
Saying a farewell
God, on our return
Will give us our life.

Leave me to mourn
The destiny of man;
This grief
Which has no name!

Lover's despair
This painful longing
For someone
Whom I love and who loves me.

Leave me to mourn
The destiny of man
O Grief
Which has no name!
I would rather suffer
Being close to you
Than die far away alone and
Engulfed in sorrow.

community would come to the docks to bid a tearful farewell to these two brave ships which for so long served as the living link between their homeland and their newly adopted country.[92]

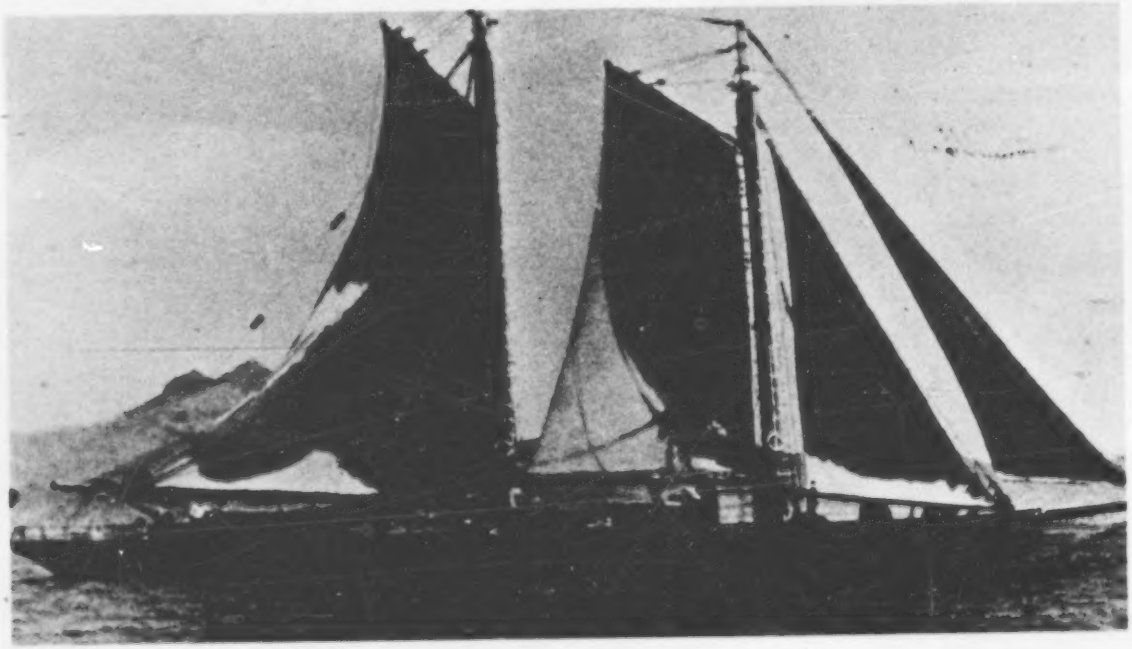
Henrique Mendes was almost killed by a falling spar on one voyage; another time the *Ernestina* ran into two hurricanes;[93] once she limped into Providence with a broken engine and almost no fresh water or supplies left. Still, she remained a faithful commuter packet until 1965, and Mendes kept coming every year, despite his claims of impending retirement. In all he made fifty-five crossings of the Atlantic before finally retiring to his farm in Fogo.[94] In 1968 he wrote to a group interested in buying the vessel for the South Street Seaport Museum in New York, "I can not go to sea no more. I am 89 years of age, I have to stay home." He died at age ninety having spent most of his life at sea.[95]

The *Ernestina* returned in 1964 and 1965, in unsuccessful efforts to revive the schooner trade with the islands.[96] While a few of the "oldtimers" preferred the leisurely trip aboard a sailing ship, steamer competition proved too stiff. Although sailing schooners were still used in inter-island trade, the attempt to bring the former *Cape Eagle*, a Canadian schooner which had not been used for five years, to Cape Verde in 1970 was the last daring effort to sail across the Atlantic in a battered 100-foot sailing ship. She sank in rough seas 185 miles northwest of Bermuda; fortunately the crewmembers and a 78-year-old passenger were saved.[98]

*The "Maria Sony"*

Several other former Canadian fishing schooners finished their careers in the Cape Verde packet trade. One of the most famous was the *Dorothy G. Snow*, which had won the Newfoundland-Halifax races in 1912 and 1914 with Captain Ansel Snow.[99] (At one time he had also owned the Effie Morrissey.) In 1939 she was bought by a Cape Verdean and was used for almost twenty years in inter-island trade and trade between Cape Verde and Dakar. In 1957 the vessel was bought by Cecilio Andrade who, after several mishaps with her, had her fitted out for a return voyage to the United States.[100] He renamed her the *Maria Sony* and on June 17, 1959 set out for Providence. She was still a racing schooner and reached Bermuda in twelve days. A hurricane struck and she had to ride out the storm under bare poles. She finally reached Newport on July 25 and was towed to Providence by a tug. Ninety minutes after debarking, one of the passengers had a baby which was named after the vessel.

After the usual festivities which greeted all the packet ships from Cape Verde, the *Maria Sony* was towed to New Bedford for an overhaul and installation of a new engine. Unfortunately, the engine broke down not a week after the departure on November 7th for Cape Verde. On November 20th rough seas broke the steering gear leaving the schooner to drift helplessly in a gale. After four days of this a huge wave crashed over the deck and broke nine beams. Now the crew feared for the structural integrity of the vessel and used



*Maria Sony* in Cape Verde. *Photo Cecelio Andrade.*

only a small triangular sail, throwing over barrels of fuel and other cargo to lighten the ship. For fifteen days she was buffeted about by the waves, her mechanical pump broken, she was slowly sinking as the crew prayed helplessly. Finally, on December 11, a freighter spotted her and started towing the old schooner to Bermuda. She was finally taken by the U.S. Coast Guard to St. George's.

Cecilio Andrade's troubles had only begun. Penniless, with a derelict schooner and a crew which refused to continue, Andrade stayed for ten months living on the generousity of local groups. Money was collected from Cape Verdean groups in the United States; and, through donated services and material in Bermuda, Andrade was able to put his boat back together again and sail for Cape Verde. On November 10, 1960 the *Maria Sony* arrived in Cape Verde one year after her departure from New Bedford. Andrade never attempted another voyage to the United States.

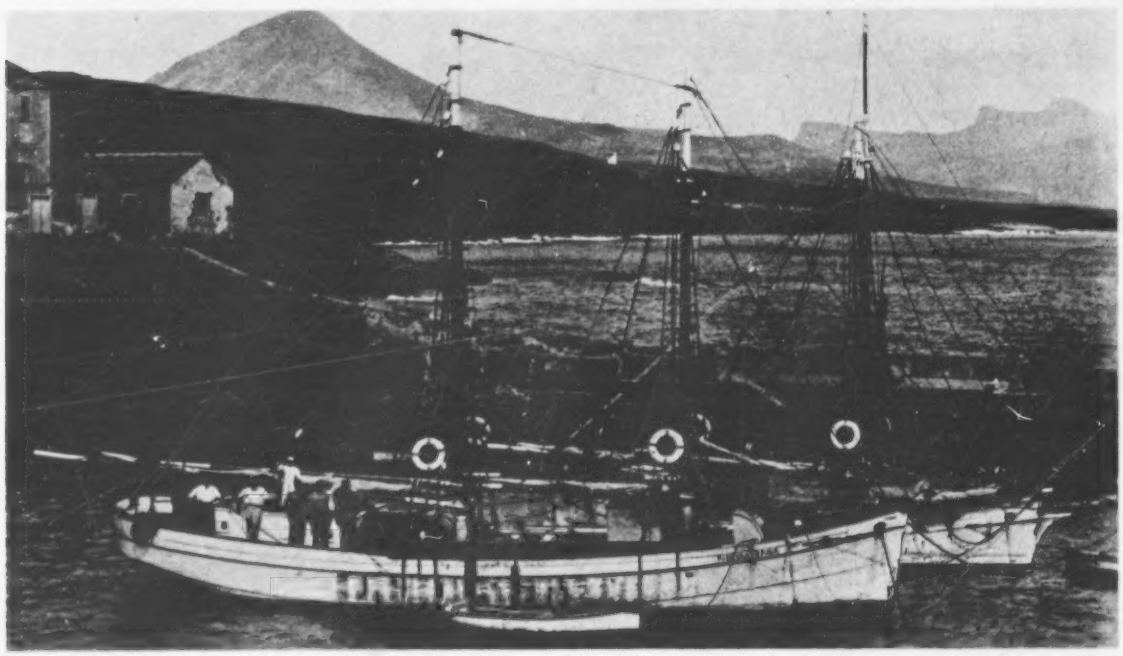
*Pedro Evora*

The captain who skippered the *Maria Sony* on her last voyage and who brought the *Ernestina* for the last time to Providence was Pedro Evora. He had piloted other ships including the schooners *Marion*, *Conrad* and *Madalan*.[101] He had made the trips in the *Madalan* in 1949, 1950, 1956, and 1957. He was the captain of the *Ernestina* in 1951 when, in his words, her masts "were cut down as if with a saw" off Fogo, and he jury-rigged two poles with sails and made his way to Brava safely. He also had command of the *Madalan* and *Ernestina* toward the end of their careers when, as he puts it, they "had lost their spirit" for they were not being properly cared for and no longer carried full cargoes.

*Seafaring in the Cape Verdes*

Although it is widely believed that a tradition of seafaring led Cape Verdeans to emigrate on the whalers and the packets, this is not the case. Actually most of the emigrants had never been off their own home island. (So, when a "greenhorn" spoke of "my land" [nha terra] he was referring to his particular island.) For most people, travel even between the islands was too expensive. Moreover, there were many periods in which there were very few vessels making such trips, making each island a little world unto itself.

For the most people the sea was not an avenue but a barrier. Fishing was the occupation of but a few, even these dared not to go too far in their tiny boats (Cape Verdean fishing boats were and still are small rowboats designed for a crew of only three,) Very few people knew how to swim, especially in more mountainous islands devoted to argriculture from which most of the immigrants to the United States came. In fact, many young men learned to swim with the express purpose of sneaking on to the whalers by night. (This was sometimes necessary because they were avoiding being drafted into the Portuguese army and would

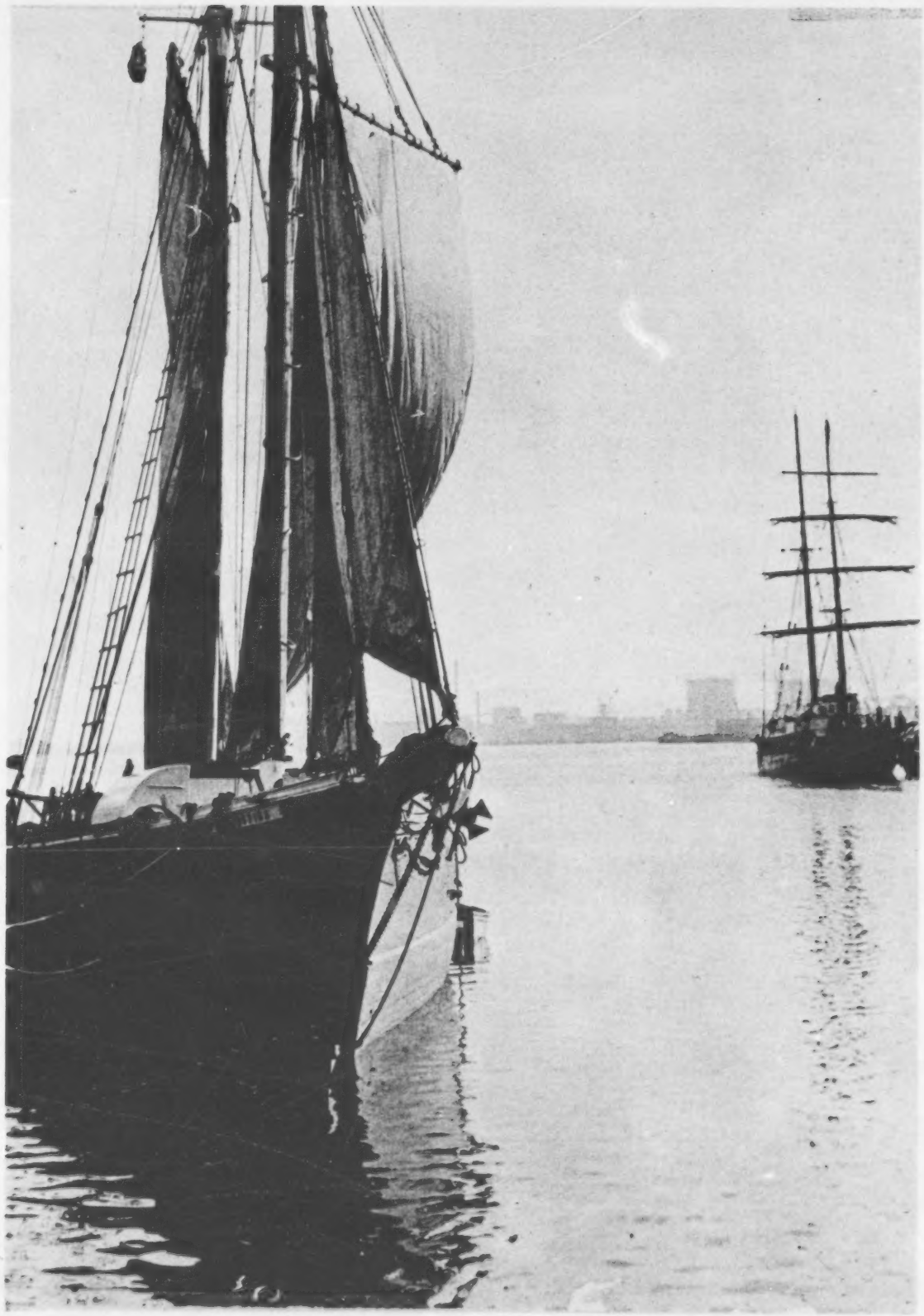


The schooner *Vila de Ribeira Brava* with its owner Captain João̱zinho Lopes da Silva on deck in the port of Preguiça, São Nicolau (1938). These smaller vessels provided Cape Verde with its only inter-island communication system.

not have been allowed to leave, if they had done so openly.) All this should not lessen our admiration for this "pioneering" generation of Cape Verdean immigrants. If anything, they are all the more to be admired for their courage in an unknown world, that of the open sea.

Many of the men who sailed these vessels to America are still alive. Hopefully their daring and skill and the bravery of the men and women who sailed with them will be remembered by the younger generation of Cape Verdean-Americans who owe their existence in the United States directly or indirectly to the successful voyage of someone in their family aboard one of the "Brava Packets."

Seaman Ben Rose and Capt. Raimundo Brito aboard a schooner leaving Providence November 1, 1957. *Providence Journal photo.*



The *Ernestina* and the *Madalan* in the port of Providence. *Joseph Latham photo. Courtesy R. I. Dept. State Library Services.*

# BROTHER*

*A Poem by Jorge Barbosa*

You have crossed the seas
in pursuit of whales
on those trips to America
from where ships sometimes never return

You have calloused hands
from pulling in the sheets
on those tiny sloops on the high seas;
You have survived horrible hours of anxiety
fighting against the storms;
You are tired and weary of the sea
Under the infernal heat of the furnaces
you fed the boilers of the steamships with coal,
in peacetime
in wartime
And you have loved with the sensual impulse of our people
women in foreign lands!

On those poor islands of ours
you the toiler of the soil
digging furrows for the water of fertile streams;
scraping at the dry earth
in those barren regions
where the rain seldom falls,
where the drought is a terrible curse
and a tragic scene of famine!

You bring to your dances
your melancholy
deep inside of your gaiety
when you play the mornas
with the sad tones of your guitar
or when you embrace the loving women in your arms
to the sound of the creole music...

The morna...
seems like the echo in your soul
of the voice of the sea
and of the nostalgia for faraway lands
to which the sea is always inviting you,
the echo
of the sound of the long desired rain
the echo
of the voice deep within all of us
of the voice of our silent tragedy!

The Morna...
takes from you and from the things around us
the expression of our humbleness
the passive expression of our drama,
of our revolt,
of our silent melancolic revolt!

America...
America is finished for you
she closed her doors to your expansion!

These adventures across the oceans
no longer exist...
they only live
in the tales you recount of your past,
with a pipe hanging in your mouth
and with joyful laughter
that will never hide
your
melancholy...

*João Gomes of Santo Antão and Brooklyn, N.Y. at the wheel of the Ernestina* on one of the ship's last regular voyages of America c. 1957. *Photo Providence Journal*

*This poem was written after the U.S. enacted the restrictive immigration laws of the 1920's. Translated by the author's son, Jorge Pedro Barboza and Dr. Michael K. H. Platzer.

## IRMÃO

Cruzaste Mares
na aventura da pesca da baleia,
nessas viagens para a América
de onde ás vezes os navios não voltam mais.

Tens as mãos calosas de puxar
as enxárcias dos barquinhos nor mar alto;
viveste horas de expectativas cruéis
na luta com as tempestades;
aborreceu-te êsse tédio marítimo
das longas calmarias intermináveis.
Sob o calor infernal das fornalhas
alimentaste de carvão as caldeiras dos vapores,
em tempo de paz
em tempo de guerra.

E amaste como ímpeto sensual da nossa gente
as mulheres nos países estrangeiros!

Em terra
nestas pobres Ilhas nossas
és o homem da enxada
abrindo levadas á água das ribeiras férteis,
cavando a terra sêca
nas regiões ingratas
onde ás vezes a chuva mal chega
onde ás vezes a estiagem é uma aflição
e um cenário trágico de fome!

Levas aos teus bailes
a tua
melancolia
no fundo da tua alegria,
quando acompanhas as Mornas com as posturas
graves do violão
ou apertas ao som da música crioula
as mulheres amoráveis contra o peito...

A Morna...
parece que é o eco em tua alma
da voz do Mar
e da nostalgia das terras mais ao longe
que o Mar te convida,
o eco
da voz da chuva desejada,
o eco
da voz interior de nós todos,
da voz da nossa tragédia sem eco!

A Morna...
tem de ti e das coisas que nos rodeiam
a expressão da nossa humildade,
a expressão passiva do nosso drama,
da nossa revolta,
da nossa silenciosa revolta melancólica!

A América...
a América acabou-se para ti...
Fechou as portas a tua expansão!

Essas Aventuras pelos Oceanos
já não existem...
Existem apenas
nas histórias que contas do passado,
com o canhoto atravessado na boca
e risos alegres
que não chegam a esconder
a tua
melancolia...

O teu destino...
O teu destino
sei lá!

Viver sempre vergado sobre a terra,
a nossa terra,
pobre
ingrata
querida!

Ser levado talvez um día
na onda alta de alguma estiagem!
como um desses barquinhos nossos
que andam pelas Ilhas
e o Oceano acaba também por levar um día!

Ou outro fim qualquer
humilde
anónimo...
Ó Caboverdeano humilde
anónimo
—meu irmão!

## *CHAPTER IV*
# A NEW LIFE IN AMERICA

A Cape Verdean Harvest. The Agnelo DePina family of Nova Sintra, Brava. 1964.

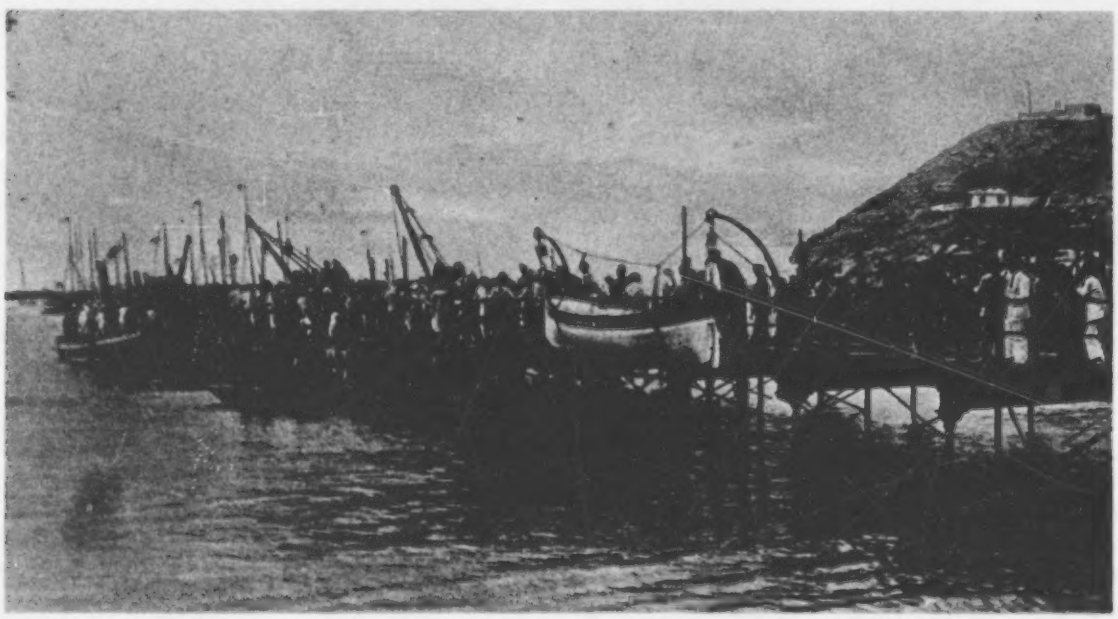
### *"Mantenhas" Maintain Community Ties*

The packets made it possible for Cape Verdeans to live and work for years in the U.S. while remaining firmly connected to their island of origin. Because of the frequency of th packets, news—and gossip—travelled fast; passengers going in either direction bore packages, letters, and verbal greetings to dozens of people on the other side. The orally-delivered greetings, called *mantenhas* in Crioulo (from Portuguese *mantenir*, to keep up or maintain), are taken much more seriously than the American "say hello to so-and-so for me." They were essential for maintaining relationships across great distances; one only has to hear the tone of indignation in those words "she didn't even send me a *mantenha*" to understand the importance of these verbal messages.

The custom of sending *mantenhas* was one of the primary ways in which an emigrant could maintain a relationship with those he had left behind. The widespread illiteracy and the fact that letters were written in the unfamiliar Portuguese language, made the *mantenhas* more important than the written word for keeping up ties of family and friendship. Transmitted in Crioulo, the first language of the Cape Verdean people, by a living link between the persons involved, the *mantenha* was a more immediate, intimate communal form of contact. It continues to link Cape Verdeans dispersed throughout the world.

Students and faculty of the Seminary-Liceu in São Nicolau circa 1910. The seminary was the center of educational life for over 50 years.

At the end of the nineteenth century New Bedford was a boom-town. Factories were expanding rapidly and anyone who wanted a job in the mills could find one. In 1880 there were two mills employing 2700 employees and by 1905 there were fifteen mills with 14,500 workers.[102] The third phase of Cape Verdean immigration to the United States was now about to take place. However, passage to America cost money—twenty or thirty dollars was beyond the capacity of the landless peasant of Cape Verde. The peasant family would often pool its resources and send one son to America. Young men leaving the islands in their teens would return after ten years or more with sufficient funds to establish a household. Until they returned to the islands permanently, they might see their wives and families only for visits every few years. In some cases men spent twenty or thirty years abroad returning to live with their wives only in old age. By this time, the ambition of most young men was to go to America; for women it was to set up an American house, with American furniture, *in* Cape Verde.[103]



The old dock in São Vicente. c. 1910.

Most of these migrants were impoverished, subsistence farmers hoping to secure a better future for themselves in the Islands by their labor aboard. The system of the land division in Brava made it particularly advantageous for peasants to go to America, since land was not concentrated in a few hands as in São Tiago or several other islands. The more socially prominent *gente branco* or "white people" of larger towns (who were not necessarily white in any European sense of the word) still regarded America as unsuitable for anyone of "refinement" and were not attracted to laboring long hours in the mills or cranberry bogs of New England. They saw emigration to America suitable only for the lower classes of Cape Verdean society.[104]

*Immigration 1900-1924*

While more information about this period (1900-1924) is available than for earlier years, we have only a general indication of the volume of the migration. Cape Verdean sources give only the number of "exits" to the U.S., they don't say how many leaving in a given year were doing so for the first time. A report made in Massachusetts in 1911 estimated that at least 500 returned to the Islands each year.[105] Many would return to the U.S. again and would be included in the departures from the Cape Verdes. American immigration records present the same difficulty, giving only the number of aliens from a given "land of origin" for each year. Because of the colonial relationship, Portugal would always be listed as the country of origin for Cape Verdeans. There were still many "secret" departures from the Islands, some to avoid being drafted by the Portuguese army, others because they could not pay for the trip. A large proportion of the entries to the United States were also unrecorded. Given all these conditions, migration figures cannot provide an accurate record. The disparity between figures from the U.S. Immigration Service and those from the records of immigration officials in Cape Verde bears illustration. From 1912-1920, for example, totals are:

| | |
|---|---|
| Exits from Cape Verde to U.S. | 10,870 |
| Entries of "Black Portuguese Aliens" to U.S. | 7,798 |
| Difference | 3082[106] |

The discrepancy was due in part to the fact that U.S. immigration officials would apply the customary American catagorizations of "black" and "white" to the

Founding members of the Cape Verdean Beneficent Association of New Bedford. Established in 1916 and incorporated in 1920, the Association is the oldest Cape Verdean organization in the United States. Standing l. to r. João Miguel Almeida, Antonio Morais, José Nicolau da Silva, Boaventura Barboza, Antonio Lopes, José Nicolau da Silva, Boaventura Barboza, Antonio Lopes, João Ricardo da Cruz. Seated l. to r. José Damaio, Miguel Antonio Teque, Francisco da Cruz Nereu, José dos Santos and Francisco Ramos. *Photo Mary Santos Barros.*

newcomers from Cape Verde. All Cape Verdeans who entered the United States legally had valid Portuguese passports. Indeed "Portuguese" was their legal nationality since Cape Verde only won its independence in 1975. However, that segment of the new arrivals from Cape Verde who appeared to be "white" European stock were counted by these U.S. officials as European Portuguese, not as "Bravas" or "Black Portuguese" as Cape Verdeans were called at the time. This early failure of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service to institute procedures which would identify Cape Verdeans as a distinct ethnic cultural group and as a multi-racial people with a geographic "land of origin" would form the basis for many problems they would have as a people in their new homeland.

Approximate as such figures are, they suggest that during this period, migration increased between the Cape Verdes and the U.S. The 1911 report calculated that fifteen hundred Cape Verdeans were arriving in New England yearly (a higher figure than official records give); a 1912 observer estimated a Cape Verdean population of 10,000-15,000 in southeastern Massachusetts alone. [107]

*Entry in the U.S.*

Until 1921, the process of admission to the U.S. took only a few hours. Medical inspectors came aboard to check for infectious deseases and give vaccinations followed by immigration officials who were normally satisfied if a person could present a passport, receipt for passage, and a few dollars. If any of these were lacking, the individual could be held until someone came to vouch for him, and to pay his passage if necessary. Tales are told of the same five dollar bill going down the line of arrivals waiting to be checked out!

At the docks in New Bedford, the immigrants were often able to walk ashore without even undergoing a U.S. customs inspection. The ships were apt to arrive at any time and the casual nature of the Cape Verde Packet trade puzzled inspectors. One inspector commented on their poverty: "When a boatload of Bravas arrived with nearly all of them barefoot, we insisted that the relatives get shoes for the new arrivals before we let them loose on an unsuspecting American democracy."[108]

*Cape Cod*

When the U.S. Immigration Commission surveyed the workforce in the New Bedford cotton mills in 1911, it found that 75% of the Cape Verdeans had been agricultural laborers. Many Cape Verdeans were unhappy toiling in dark, dirty, noisy, airless factories; and, when they found they could be paid more in the seasonal cranberry industry of Cape Cod, they set out for the nearby farms.

> The newcomers are usually a small group, say half a dozen men, who appear in the press of the cranberry season when their services are gratefully accepted. They find accommodation in some old barn or shed, where they live peaceably enough, the sound of dancing and of a crude guitar on a summer evening being the only thing which proclaims their presence.
>
> They buy milk from a nearby farmer and are punctilious in their payments. Once established, they proceed to make themselves extremely useful. They pick strawberries, in due succession. In the winter they gather shellfish. And so in the spring they import a wife ... buy some abandoned farmhouse and move in. The land that has lain fallow for a decade is coaxed into fertility.[110]

Earning a living during the picking season on the cranberry bogs was a family affair. c. 1890. *Photo Ocean Spray, Inc.*

3 51

By 1910 hundreds of Cape Verdeans were employed as laborers in the bogs the year round, and about three thousand were employed during the six-week harvest season. The pay for a seven hour working day during the harvest was $1.40 to $1.75 for a hand picker and from $3.00 to $5.25 for a scoop picker.[111] To the bog owners the Cape Verdeans provided a needed source of cheap labor who could be hired on a daily basis. In addition their employers viewed them as:

> reliable under supervision, docile, obedient, willing to work, and not over-fastidious with regard to food or shelter or the discomforts of the weather, and apparently satisfied with the isolation and somewhat disagreeable work ..., [and] furthermore, they were almost the only men who can now be obtained in sufficient number to supply the demand for bog laborers.[112]

Lunch break in the bogs. *Photo Ocean Spray, inc.*

Cape Verdean worker in the cranberry bogs of southeastern Massachusetts c. 1895. *Photo Ocean Spray, Inc.*

Raking cranberries from the bogs of Cape Cod was back-breaking work for thousands of Cape Verdean immigrant laborers. *Photo Ocean Spray, Inc.*

For most of the Cape Verdean pickers this work was only a seasonal occupation but they would come back to the bogs year after year. During the rest of the year, they would go back to Cape Verde or stay in America and try to find jobs in the cities. Some of those who were unable to find steady employment would chop wood, collect wild flowers and fruit, and sell them on the streets of New Bedford. Cape Verdeans are said to have started the strawberry industry in Falmouth. Others found off-season employment on the oyster boats along the coast and in ice plants.

However, a change was now occurring in the type of immigrants as the number increased. Rather than the predominantly lighter-skinned Brava peasant type, darker skinned laborers from the other islands were being brought under contract to the cranberry bog-owners and to the mill towns. Agreements were made with the Cape Verdean sea captains to bring a specific number of laborers for the cranberry picking season; the ship passage was then deducted from the laborer's first months' wages. Some of these people were often children of freed slaves, the impoverished laborers of the feudal landowners of Fogo and Santiago, and those who were literally starving as a result of the famine of 1902-1903. The conditions aboard these ships approached that of slave ships. A reporter for the *Falmouth Enterprise* noted that:

> We caught a well-known and well-to-do citizen of New Bedford, whose name presumably had been Rodriquez, on the shore of Buzzards Bay one night where he had rounded up and was taking away twenty-five barefoot Cape Verde Islanders clothed in two piece garments resembling pajamas and smelling like an old slave ship.[113]

The conditions in the dingy barracks set up to receive these workers were scarcely better. Unmarried men were forced to live in bare barracks rooms, sleeping in shifts. Large families would share houses where only one family previously lived. Most of the houses where the Cape Verdeans lived in the South End of New Bedford were without toilets and the city made no provision for disposing of garbage and waste. The infant mortality rate was very high and schooling

was not encouraged for the Cape Verdeans. It is scarcely surprising that these immigrants were more discouraged and less ambitious than their predecessors, as Black-Americans particularly were experiencing the full brunt of the economic depression.

Conditions were similar for the Cape Verdeans who came to work in the cranberry fields. Housing was often rude company owned shacks built to give a minimum of shelter and a maximum of profit for the bog owners. Many pickers, unused to American food and climate, died at the bogs of diseases caused partly by these poor living conditions. One doctor commenting on their high rate of mortality and sickness said, "...They died like flies from pneumonia and tuberculosis."[114]

Cape Verdean immigrant worker in the cranberry bogs. *Photo Ocean Spray, Inc.*

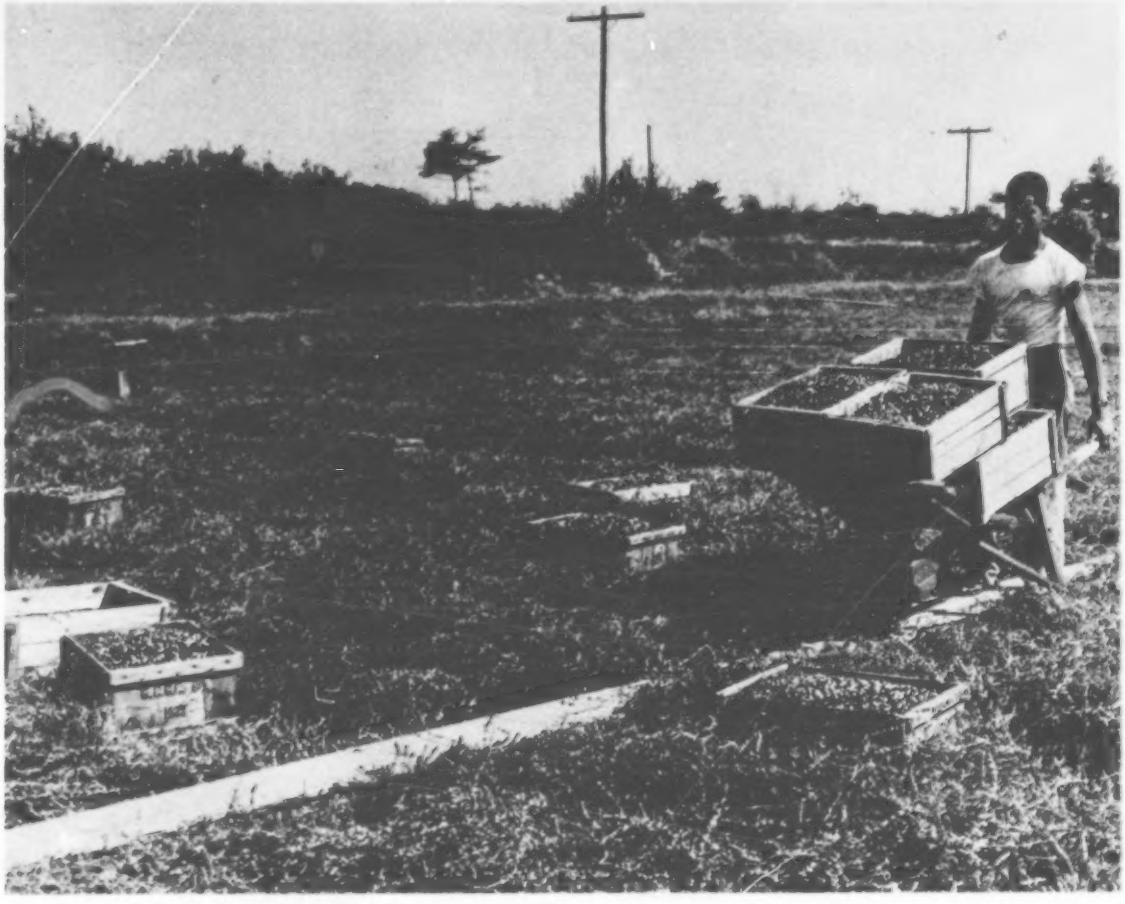
At first, the permanent homes of the Cape Verdeans were little better:

> Near Wareham (Massachusetts), where there are several families of permanent residents, they and the transient pickers live in a dirty squalid quarter of the village locally known as "Fogo"...The families living near the bogs dwell in miserable houses. They have gardens and raise some cabbages, beans, and potatoes; some have a few chickens, but the aspect of the whole domestic economy is very depressing...windows stuffed with rags, fences down, doors sagging, roofs leaking...[115]

In 1933, fifteen hundred cranberry pickers went on strike, demanding a 75 cents per hour wage, guaranteed employment until season's end, and recognition of their right to organize. They claimed they were only paid 15-20 cents an hour. The strike spread, and on September 14 violence broke out: a bog owner shot and wounded a Cape Verdean worker when a crowd of strikers gathered at his house. Sixty-four pickers in Middleboro and Wareham were arrested.[116]

Finally, when the growers started using outside or so-called "scab" workers to pick the rotting fruit, the Cape Verdeans, hungry and destitute, returned to work under police protection. One explanation of the strike suggested by Judge James Bento, a Cape Verdean, is that it was organized by outsiders but that Cape Verdean pickers, after a generation of hostility, joined the strike hoping that they could improve their poor wages. The Cape Verdean cranberry picker strike was the first such effort by agricultural workers in the history of Massachusetts.

The mill workers also staged a desperate strike in 1928 in response to a 10% wage cut, but so many workers—French Canadian, Portuguese, Azoreans—were competing for a dwindling number of jobs that the strike was easily broken, and the factories remained "sweatshops."[117] In the Great Depression almost 50% of the Cape Verdeans were unemployed, with an eighteen month average duration of unemployment.[118]



A wheel barrel man balancing his heavy load on a narrow plank leading out of the sponge-like cranberry bogs. *Photo Ocean Spray, Inc.*

Cape Verdean and Afro-American longshoremen in the early twentieth century.

In 1917, a new U.S. law required that immigrants be literate. Many prepared themselves for the literacy test before leaving the islands or even on the ocean journey. Enrique Mendes taught the Pledge of Allegiance to his passengers on the *Ernestina*. Although some were denied entry, there were cases such as the woman who, when presented with the test in Portuguese, said aloud to herself in Crioulo, "*Ai Nha Mai*"—"Oh, my mother!" (a common expletive in Brava) "Now they're going to send me back!" "Passed," said the Anglo-American inspector, evidently believing she was reading the Portuguese test![119]

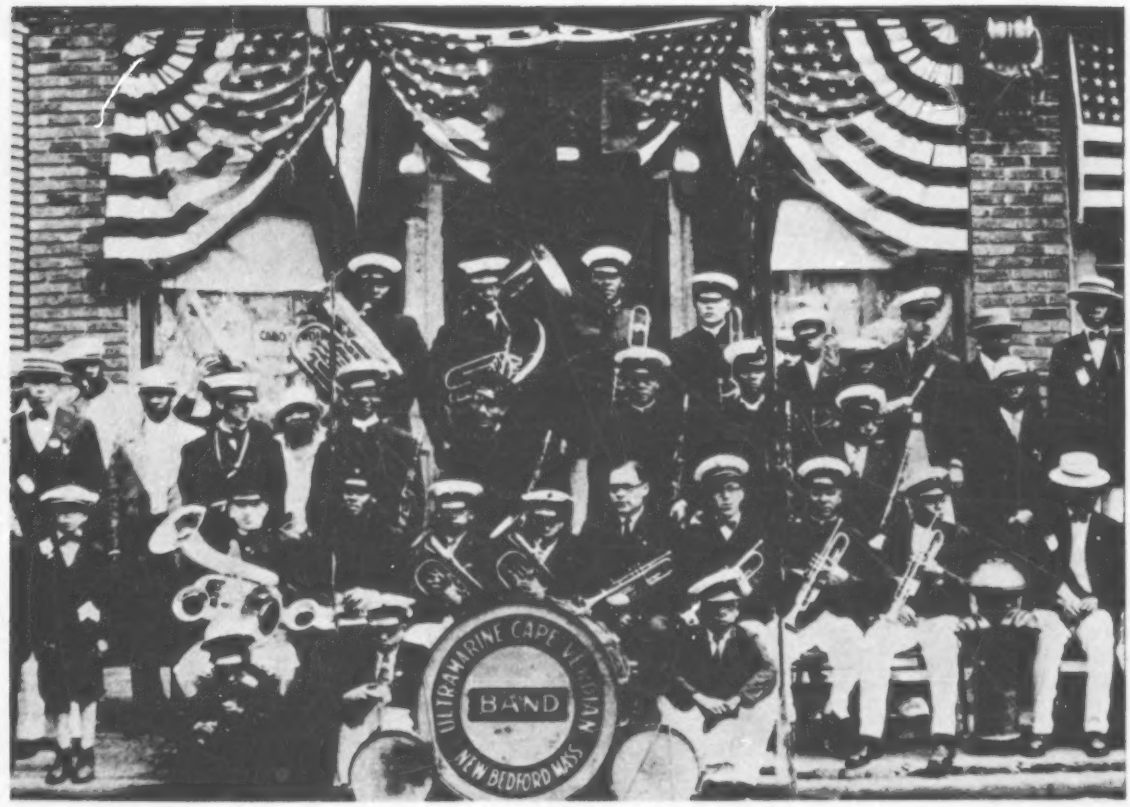
The restrictive immigration laws of 1921 spelled the beginning of the end of large scale immigration. Not only could far fewer Cape Verdeans enter the U.S. than before, but those in the U.S. were afraid to visit the Islands unless their citizenship papers were inorder. With America's "open door" closing on immigrants of color, the once busy harbor at Furna on Brava was empty, and the small island became nearly as removed from the outside world as she was early in the nineteenth century. The steady flow of new immigrants began to recede to a mere trickle.

However, Cape Verdeans began to migrate to other areas of the U.S. Colonies of Cape Verdeans have grown in such industrial cities in Connecticut as Waterbury and New Haven, in New York City, in New Jersey textile cities, in Philadelphia and Pennslyvania steel towns, and in Ohio rubber manufacturing centers. Cape Verdeans have gone to Providence to work in the paper and clothing factories and on the docks. Others have followed their predecessors who jumped ship in California to become longshoremen in San Francisco and Oakland or farmers in Alameda county.

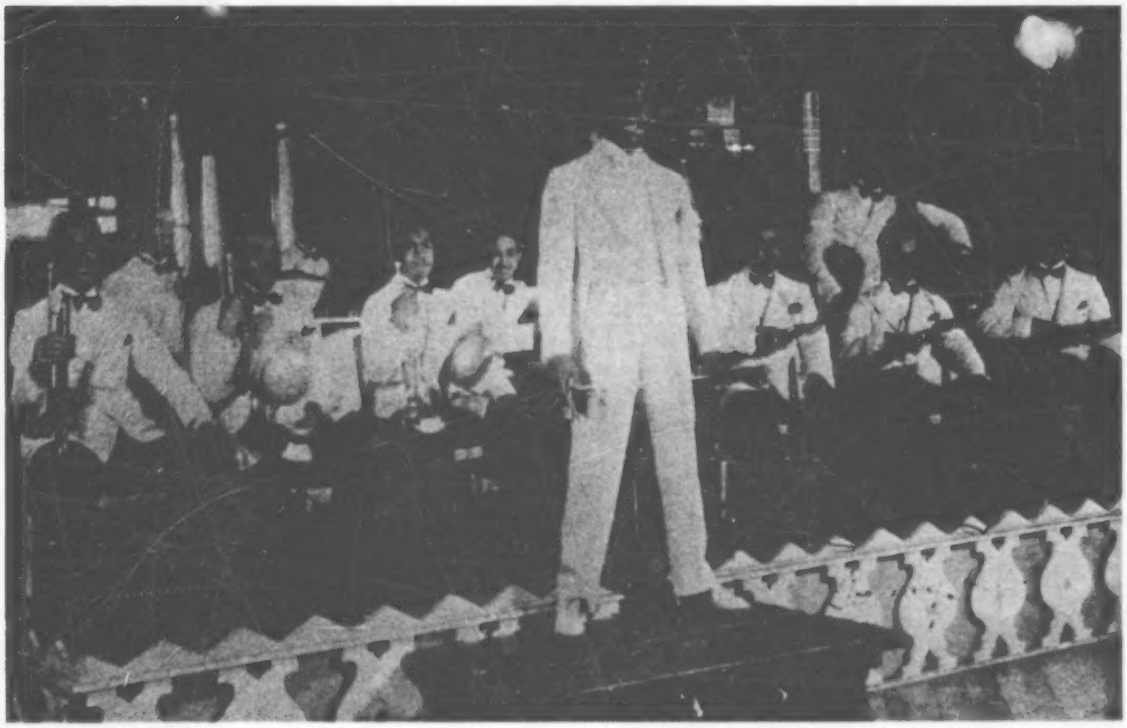
Since the discriminatory restrictions of the 1920's were lifted with the enactment of the new immigration laws of 1965, a new wave of Cape Verdeans are making their way to America. Today the fastest growing centers of Cape Verdean migration in the U.S. are Boston and Scituate, Massachusetts; Pawtucket, Rhode Island; and Waterbury, Connecticut.

Today's immigrants come to a land they have known since childhood, through the letters of relatives and the visits or returns of *'mercanos* to Cape Verde. For those whose family and friends are already in the United States, going to America is something of a homecoming. At the same time they become part of a worldwide community of "hyphenated Cape Verdeans" who, whether in Lisbon, Paris, Rotterdam, Dakar, or other parts of the world, remain identified with the Islands and involved in their future.

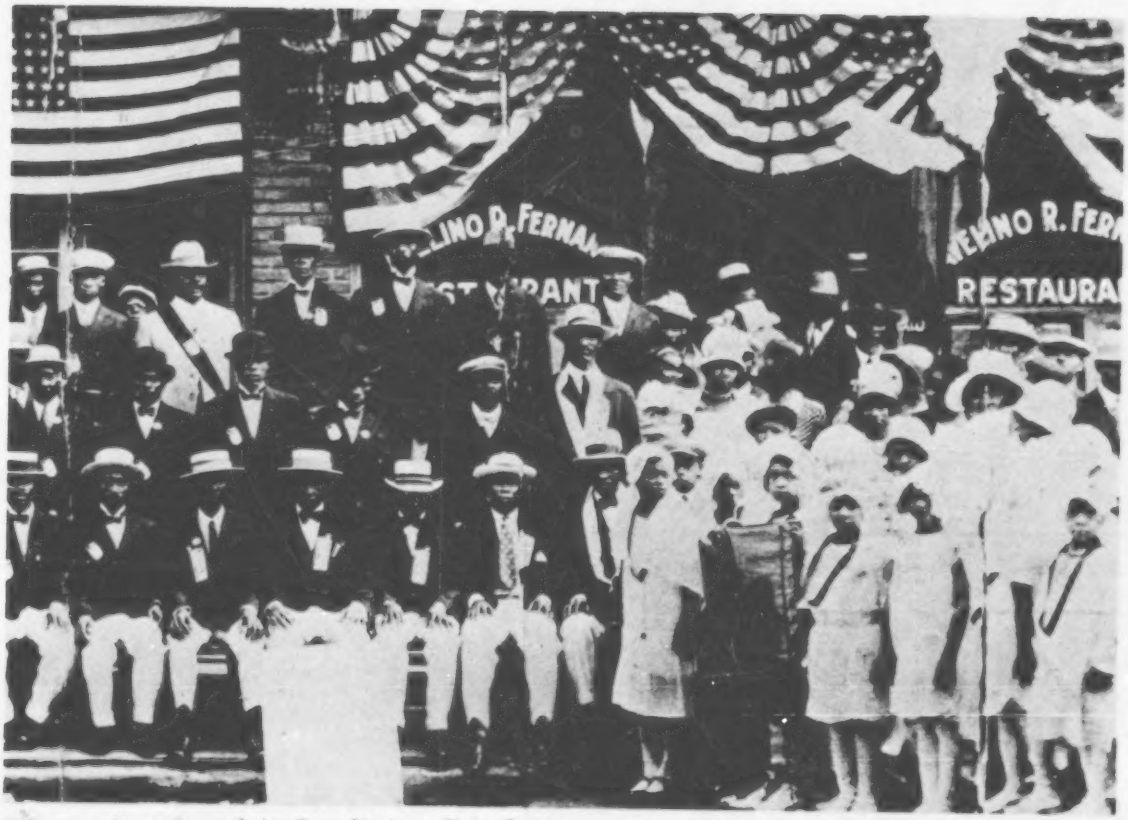
Cape Verdeans have worked in many trades along the waterfront. John Alves from Brava (top left) worked for the Orr Marine Construction and Salvage Company in Providence for 53 years. *Photo Mary Alves Haskins.*




Cape Verdean Ultramarine Band Club of New Bedford on a visit to the Bridgeport, Connecticut Cape Verdean Club in 1925. *photo courtesy of Antonia Sequeira*



Duke Oliver and his band. These first generation Cape Verdean-Americans formed a popular band in the 1930's.




Officers and members of the Cape Verdean Club of Bridgeport, Connecticut. *photo courtesy of Antonia Sequeira*

The "old church."Our Lady of the Assumption Church, New Bedford. The only Roman Catholic parish founded by Cape Verdeans in the United States. *Photo Mary Santos Barros.*

# FOOTNOTES

## *CHAPTER I*
## EARLY CONTACTS

[1]British commercial influence was also of considerable importance during the nineteenth century, especially in the port city of Mindelo, S. Vicente.

[2]Samuel Eliot Morison, *Christopher Columbus Mariner* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company), p. 137.

[3]T. Bentley Duncan *Atlantic Islands* (University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 210.

[4]Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 115; cf. Duncan, T. Bentley, *Atlantic Islands, p. 210.*

[5]*Charles Darwin's Diary of the Voyage of H.M.S. "Beagle"* (Cambridge University Press, 1933); January 24, 1832, September 4, 1836.

[6]Andrew Foote, *Africa and the American Flag* (N.Y.: Appleton, 1854), p. 218, 221.

[7]George Dow, *Slave Ships and Slaving* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1969), Chapter XIV, "Slaving Voyages by Rhode Island Vessels"; p. 268.

[8]*Congressional Record*, March 26, 1884, p. 2284.

[9]*Op Cit.* Dow, *Slave Ships and Slaving*, Chapter XV "Some American Slave Ships", p. 279.

[10]George Brooks, Jr., "American Trade as a Factor in West African History on the Early Nineteenth Century" in Daniel McCall, editor *Western African History* (N.Y. Praeger, 1969), p. 140.

[11]George Brooks, Jr., *Yankee Traders, Old Coasters and African Middlemen* (Boston: Boston University Press, 1970), p. 149-150.

[12]Hodges Official Correspondence, *National Archives*, Consular Records, São tiago.

[13]George Brooks, Jr, *New England Merchants* Chapter VI, "Cape Verde Islands and West Africa 1821-27," pp. 97-104.

[14]Samuel Train letter to Samuel Hodges, Jr., June 23, 1818, Folder *11, Box 2, Hodges Papers: American Antiquarian Society. See also Representative Men and Old Families of Southeastern Massachusetts (Chicago, 1912) III, 1530.

[15] Log of Brig *Augusta*, July 9, 1804; Salem Ship Register, 14. Essex Institute, reprinted in *New England Merchants in Africa*, p. 17.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 18

[17]Hodges Papers, letter to Henry Clay dated August 22, 1825, reprinted in *New England Merchants*, p. 102.

[18] Log of *Augusta Op. Cit.* July, 1804; *New England Merchants*, p. 15.

[19]*En Saios Sobre a Statistica das Possessões Portuguesas no Ultramar Livro 1*: Das Ilhas de Cabo Verde e Suas Dependências (Lisbon, Imprenso Nacional 1844), p. 39.

[20]Antonio Carreira, "A Ilha de Maio Demografia e Problema Sociais e economicas" separata do No. 19 da *Revista do Centro de Estudos Demografias*, Lisbon 1971.

[21]Examination of Port Records 1816-1825, Praia, owned by Felix Monteiro.

[22]*Boston Evening Transcript*, October 8, 1832.

[23]*Ibid.*, October 10, October 12, October 22, 23, 1832.

[24]*Ibid.*, November 21, 1832; Niles Register, November 24, 1832.

[25]*Boston Courier* November 20, 1832.

[26]"Voyage of *Citizen*", 1843, Journal kept by Erasmus D. Bill; Copy in Ruzella Hazard Papers, Sag Habor Library.

[27]Letter published in *New York Weekly Herald*, May 10, 1856.

[28]*New York DailyTimes*, April 28, May 3, 1856.

[29]*New York Daily Times*, May 16, 23, 30 1856.

[30]*New York Journal of Commerce*, July 7, 1856.

[31]Letter of U.S. Vice Consul at St. Vincent, Cape Verde Islands, July 24, 1856.

[32]*New York Journal of Commerce* September 1, 1856

[33]*New York Times* April 28, May 3, 1856

[34]Consul William Morris, Jan 1, June 30, July 1, 1856. Dept. of State'National Archives.

## *CHAPTER II*
## WHALING

[35]Ivan T. Sanderson, *Follow the Whale* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1956) p. 261.

[36]Carl Norman Haywood, *American Whalers in Africa*, Boston University Ph.D.

[37]Elmo P. Hohman, *The American Whaleman* (N.Y.; Longmans, Green and Co., 1928).

[38]*Op.Cit.* fn. 2, p. 67.

[39]Jorge Barbosa, "Islands," a poem.

[40]Lyall, Archibald, *Black and White Makes Brown; An account of a Journey to the Cape Verde Islands and Portuguese Guinea*, London: W. Heinemann, 1938. p.96.

[41]*Op. Cit.*, Dow, *Slave Ships and Slaving*, "The Voyage of the Hannibal" p. 41.

[42]October 14, 1849. Log of the *Mattapoisett*. Oct 14, 1849. Old Dartmouth Historical Society

[43]N.W.C. Document No. 1:7.

[44]Log of the *Chili*. Dec. 19, 1857. Old Dartmouth Historical Society.

[45]Letter of Benjamin Tripp, Jr. to F.W. Seward; May 12, 1868, National Archives, Consular Records, Saotiago.

[46]Complaint of Governor General of Cape Verde to U.S. Consul, July 24, 1835; Letter of F. Gardner to John C. Calhoun, March 20, 1845; Letter of William Peixot to State Department, October 20, 1848; W. H. Morse to Daniel Webster, January 29, 1852, National Archives, Consular Records in Saotiago.

[47]Walter E. Hammond, From Meeting on the Pedro Varela. The Adventures of a Twentieth Century Whaleman, *Historical Footnotes Bulletin of the Stonington Historical Society* Vol. X No. 1, November 1972.

[48]"The Cape Verdeans" *Falmouth Enterprise*, May 18, 1973.

[49]*Op. Cit.*, Hohman, *The American Whaleman*, p. 318.

[50]Ship Registers, New Bedford Whaling Museum.

[51]*Op. Cit. Follow the Whale* p. 261.

[52]Joseph Games, *Captain Joe* (N.Y.: Vantage Press, 1960).

[53]*Falmouth Enterprise*, June 12, 1973; *New Bedford StandardTimes*, Feb. 17, 1974.

[54]"The Last of the Whalers" *Cape Verdean.*

## *CHAPTER III*
## THE CAPE VERDEAN-AMERICAN PACKET TRADE

[55]Haywood, Carl Norman. *American Whalers and Africa*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Boston University, 1967, page 15.

[56]Seamens' Bethel crew register kept by New Bedford Whaling Museum.

[57]Barrel maker.

[58]Antone Lopes (New Bedford) oral account.

[59]"Cape Verdeans Expert Sailors", *The Evening*

*Bulletin* (Providence) May 29, 1929.

[60]National Archives Consular Records, Saotiago, Letter to Josiah Quincy, June 17, 1893. Correspondence re: Nellie May continues until 1915.

[61]Hanks, *Op. Cit. Yachting*, May 1949 p. 48; Swan, Bradford, "A rolling down to Brava once more", *Providence Sunday Journal* Sept. 24, 1939.

[62]Swan, *Op. Cit.*

[63]*Hanks, Op. Cit., Yachting*, p. 49.

[64]Swan, *Op. Cit.*

[65]Ibid, Swan, *Op. Cit.*

[66]Giles Todd,*The Last Sail Down East*- The Cape Verde Packets, p. 232.

[67]Oral account given by Jorge Pedro Barbosa.

[68]Biographical data provided by son of H. Texeira da Sousa.

[69]"jury-rigged" - temporary replacement of essential equipment or parts of a vessel e.g. *jury* mast.

[70]Information provided by Roy Teixeira, Medford, Mass. 1977.

[71]Three-masted packet swept ashore at Ipswich Beach (Mass.), August 1939 before making a single passage across the ocean. Hanks *Rudder*, pg. 21.

[72]*Ibid.*

[73]She was originally owned by Abilio Monteiro, mayor of Praia. However, eight Cape Verdeans from the vessel were caught in Wareham (Mass.) in 1926 and the ship was sold to pay the fine. Lucy M. Wallbank "50 years ago- Entering the Cape Verde Trade" Hanks, *Rudder*, p. 21.

[74]Todd, *Op. Cit.*, p. 232-236; Harry Neyland, "Bound for the Cape Verde Islands Aboard the Bark *Coriolanus*", *New Bedford Standard Times*, September 17,1924.

[75]Account of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Texeira.

[76]Todd, *Op. Cit.* p. 236.

[77]Biographical information provided by John Costa in interview with Michael Platzer.

[78]The four master *Burkeland* built at Milton, Florida in 1918 made several trips between New Bedford and the Cape Verde Islands. She sank within 50 miles from Brava. The crew took the yawl boat and rowed ashore to safety.

[79]Todd, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 242-243.

[80]Robert L Wheeler, "Lucy, Costa, Texeira and Uncle Aurelio", *Providence Journal*, April 14, 1946, p. 56.

[81]Giles M.S. Todd, *Lucy Evelyn*-Brava Packet", *Motor Boating*, November, 1946, p. 102.

[82]Todd, *Last Sail, Op. Cit.* p. 243.

[83]Stuart Hale, "Former Luxury Yacht Prepares to Make First Cape Verde Journey," *Providence Journal*, March 2, 1947, p. 13.

[84]Jeff Davis, "Brigantine Due to Sail Tomorrow on Three Weeks Voyage to Cape Verde", *Providence Journal*, June 1, 1947, pg. 13; Brigantine *Madalan* to Set Sail Today on Voyage to Cape Verde, *Prividence Sunday Journal*, June 8,1947.

[85] Todd *Last Sail, Op. Cit.*, p. 248.

[86] Walter Hird "When the *Madalan* Sails for the Cape Verdes," *Ships and the Sea* Summer 1954, p. 4.

[87]Robert C. Frederiksen,, "After 57 years seafaring, A Little Farm in Fogo," *Providence Journal Bulletin*, September 27, 1955.

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## *CHAPTER IV*

## NEW LIFE IN AMERICA

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